

AN AMERICAN  
with LORD ROBERTS

JULIAN RALPH

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LORD ROBERTS





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ROBERTS

By JULIAN RALPH

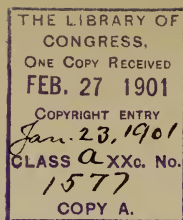
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CHINA," "AN ANGEL IN A WEB," ETC.*



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## PREFACE

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THESE records of the South African war, in continuation of my former volume, "Towards Pretoria," are practically fresh, and are mainly on subjects of wide interest. They include material which has never been published anywhere, as well as much that has not before been presented to the American public.

Even those chapters which originally appeared in the "Daily Mail" as letters from the front have, in many cases, been recast and extended. I desire here to thank Mr. Alfred Harmsworth for his generous permission to make this new use of the material.

One chapter appeared in "Harper's Magazine," and another in "The Century Magazine," and these, also, have been subjected to material changes.

The fault of delay in the publication of the book is thus, I hope, atoned for by the careful revision of that which was not new, and the liberal addition of material especially prepared for this work.

THE AUTHOR.

*January, 1901.*



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# AN AMERICAN WITH LORD ROBERTS.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE TEUTON TUG OF WAR

WHEN Field-Marshal Lord Roberts came out to South Africa he came to take the command in what had every outward aspect of a losing game. The army was not daunted, though it was checked. The people of England were not despondent, but they were depressed, and they had yielded their spirits to be alternately swept along upon high waves of exultation, or dashed down into gulfs of anxious misgiving. They did not at first realise that their armies were fighting a country quite as much as an enemy; that the veldt offered a problem which no army had ever before encountered; that in British colonies the conditions of civil war were present, and had to be suppressed. The Boer was, perhaps, the least difficult to overcome of these three novel obstacles in the army's path, and the British public realised that they were not doing as

gloriously as they were wont; they were not even having their own way slowly, and so each citizen became a critic of all the generals who were at the front.

When Lord Roberts actually arrived, the force in the field was not seeing the daybreak of a change for the better from any single point at which it was halted. Over in Natal an army was locked up in Ladysmith, with the Boers holding the door, and an outer force battering at it and at them in vain. In the south, General French, the cavalry leader who had done so splendidly at Elandslaagte, and was yet to do as well under Lord Roberts, was harassing the Boers with spirited and incessant energy along such a front as only the latest warfare produces—a thirty to forty mile position, but he was not gaining ground. On the west, Lord Methuen had run the front wheels of his army against a boulder called Maaghersfontein, and could not get over it. It was to this state of things that the Field-Marshal came, and, by the magic of his name and presence, by his unerring instinct and masterly resource, by his commanding genius and sound strategy, he altered the entire situation in what now seems no time at all—as with a blow.

Let us look back over the experience of Lord Methuen, who seemed for a time to be conducting a military waltz rather than a mere promenade from the Orange River to Kimberley. We shall see that it was the country of the Boers that he was fighting, quite as

much if not more than the Boers of the country. To begin with, the British set up an advanced supply station at De Aar, in Cape Colony, eighty miles below the Orange River. There they gathered in profuse abundance all that could be needed by an army in the field : horses, mules, carts, forage, food, saddles, uniforms, accoutrements, shoes, harness—everything. When they had half their stores there, the tents and corrugated iron sheds in which they were stored were closely packed in the middle of a valley commanded on the right and left by kopjes, with a wide open piece of veldt to the southward, and a narrow pass at the other end. They had but few troops to guard the treasure, and they did not fortify the hills. When the largest amount of stores was there they had only one regiment of infantry, a battery, and a corps of scouts to defend the place. They dug trenches across the veldt, and fortified the principal hill on either side ; but even then they could not have withstood such an attacking force as it would have been well worth an enemy's while to send forward.

Thus at the very outset the country itself—the peculiar surface and nature of the ground—began to tell against the British. No attack was made ; yet they were surrounded by Boers and rebels. Practically every so-called farmer in the neighbourhood was up in arms ; rebels were in and out of the camp all day and every day, pretending to have horses, forage, or garden-

stuff to sell. Commandoes were hovering about in the north, on both sides, and never far off; yet no attack was made. This proved that the Boer knew the true value of his country, and that he had begun to use it to the best advantage. He could hold a place like De Aar with a thousand men against ten thousand, but he would not attack it—or any place, or any one—unless the natural surrounding offered nearly complete shelter to himself. He attacked in the open in daylight but once or twice in these seven months; he made a night attack once only, I believe. De Aar, then, was unmolested because the Boer used himself and his strange surroundings in combination. In what follows we shall see how he did this, and what proportion of the impediments in the way of British success should be credited to the character of the land round Great Britain's army.

The South African veldt is the most easily defended country in the world—"the best defensive country" is how a military man might put it. On every mile or two there is a natural fort—or half a dozen of them. These are the so-called kopjes, short, thick, volcanic-looking hills, often with a squared-off summit or a crater-like bowl on the top, such as Majuba has. They are rocky hills, but not rocky as the reader is likely to understand the term, for these are nothing but rocks—hills made of rocks, so that the surface is a fret-work of the outermost boulders. Between and around these

kopjes lies the veldt, which always looks level, but is never so.

It looks level because it is a dead and dull monotony of baked earth, sage tufts, and stones, any single acre being precisely like the next hundred or ten thousand. Instead of being smooth, it rises and falls in earth billows, and often in the depression behind the ridge of such a billow an army can move. I have seen a long railway train lost on an apparently level veldt when it turned into one of these depressions. But there is far better cover for the Boers than these afford. There are the so-called nullahs and spruits, which seam the veldt in millions of places. No one can see them until he is almost upon them, yet there troops can move unseen on horseback. In hundreds of them the whole Boer army could ride invisible for miles. At Belmont I was watching the retreating Boers and the pursuing mounted men. Looking down from the kopje's top, I saw the entire cavalcade suddenly disappear as if the earth had yawned and swallowed it. I went to the place afterward, and found that it was one of these rifts made by a torrent in the rainy season, a dozen or fourteen feet deep, and a great deal wider. Had the British mounted force pushed on they would have been decimated before they saw this gutter, but fortunately their horses were too jaded, and they did not go so far.

At Modder River, on the left of the Boers' main po-

sition, they used a part of one of these huge cracks in the earth as a kraal (corral) for their horses. This was a spruit, but, being bone-dry, was the same as a nullah. You could hide a two-storied house in it, and it ran to the river from a distance of half a mile. Here all their horses were knee-haltered and left with forage, and when the Boers retreated they ran to this place, under cover of the river-side trees and shrubbery, sprang to saddle, and rode the full length of the gutter before they could have been seen—had it been daylight.

Only think what their position was at Modder River! Here they took advantage of the extraordinary defensive qualities of one of their rivers, qualities not to be found elsewhere. These South African rivers are, during nine months in the year, narrow, shallow, muddy streams that form a mere ribbon in the centre of a very wide, very deep cavity in the earth. The configuration of this bed is marked or terraced, as if to show the varying heights to which the river rises. There is, first, a short but precipitous fall from the level of the veldt to where the incline of the bed begins. Small trees and shrubs grow on this slope down to the point which the water reaches in normal seasons of flood. Below this incline is a flat, broad bed, all paved with large, smooth-topped stones. In the middle of this bed flows the normal river.

Thus these rivers are, like the dry clefts in the veldt,



natural defensive positions, ready-made trenches, impromptu sunken forts. We shall see, by describing how the Boers used the Modder at the battle of that name (and again at Paardeberg, where Cronje surrendered), how perfect a defence such a place gives, and how skilfully the Boers use the opportunities their ground offers.

They dug a trench parallel with the river-bank, close to its edge, and turned the excavated earth into a breastwork, in which they stuck boughs and branches of trees to blend with the foliage behind them. Here riflemen, thousands strong, took their position, and held it for nearly twelve hours, without its ever being known to most of the British troops, whose progress they stopped, whether the Boers were on the same side of the river as themselves or on the farther side. Of such immense value is smokeless powder. By its use the Boers, whose chief aim is to keep out of sight, made even their fire—their fighting—invisible.

We have seen that the South African river-beds begin with a sheer declivity, a precipitous outer edge. This wall provided shelter for the officers, stretcher-bearers, ammunition-distributors, and water-carriers, who passed freely and safely up and down the rear of their line, even on horseback, if they were so minded. Those who had occasion to pass to and from the trenches and this deep-sheltered "runway" found that the plentiful vegetation, skirting the bed's edge

in a narrow but dense line, gave them their needed chance to remain out of view of the British.

As a rule the adjacent land slopes toward a river, but South African topography violates all rules, and at this place the land inclined downward and away from the stream, so that every object as large as a jack-rabbit could be seen by the entrenched Boers at a distance of three miles. There appears, now, to have been nothing but luck in our winning that battle. It was the former belief that there were 7,000 or 8,000 Boers in those trenches, but there were nothing like so many, in all probability. Yet they held the British flat upon their stomachs all day, while they pumped lead over their heads as I verily believe bullets were never shot before. They did no other fighting than to stay in a gutter and shoot. It was their country that perplexed and hindered the British most, for many of them did not even know the Boers' whereabouts. They never saw them. At last a handful of ever-valorous, recklessly brave men got across the river, and cheered with an Anglo-Saxon "Hip, hip, hurrah!" in order to warn a British battery and some of their own men not to continue shooting in that direction. At this sound the Boers, imagining that 10,000 men were about to flank them, took alarm and fled.

Another feature of the veldt which helps to make this land easily defensible against any power on earth, is that it is scored and seamed by the usually dry beds

of the small tributaries of the rivers. These are deep, broad, steep-walled trenches dug into the earth by running water, and cannot be seen until you are within a few score yards of them. It was in one of these, called Corne Spruit, a little tributary of the Modder near Bloemfontein, that General Broadwood's convoy was trapped, when he was being shelled by an enemy that he supposed was entirely in his rear. The Boers suddenly came out from their hiding-places in the spruit, and demanded the surrender of the waggons, and also of the guns of a battery which had been driven into the web. This was another instance of utilising nature as an ally, and also a fine bit of strategy, the finest the Boers had then worked out.

But South African land formation has not contented herself with assisting her lords and masters merely with hollows, ridges, sluits, spruits, and kopjes. In order to provide a fortification to every square mile of the land, she has devised stone breastworks. These are oftenest found at the foot of a kopje, but the rule has such plentiful exceptions that no one can know where he will come across a collection of great boulders behind which men may hide and attack wild game or human foe. These collections of great black rocks may comprise a few in an irregular line or two, or they may cumber a square half-mile of the veldt, thrown over it thickly and in confusion. These the Boers can utilise on the open veldt, or as they

did at Maaghersfontein, they may fringe the foot of a kopje, and, with the added help of bushes, may make them serve as a screen, from behind which reinforcements, ammunition, and water can be safely passed to the men in the trenches.

Of all these obstacles the men of Lord Methuen's flying column made light, by sheer valour—by a bravery which other soldiers may match, but which no men on earth can possibly excel. These British officers and "Tommies" have a quality of courage that passes my understanding, and baffles all calculation when I consider the return it makes for the cost it entails. At Belmont and Graspan the troops stalked up kopjes against almost literal ropes of bullets. The more experienced were placed five paces apart, and most of them escaped, but the naval brigade and the Grenadier Guards, who lacked either proper orders or experience, marched along almost shoulder to shoulder, seeing their comrades drop like autumn leaves in a gale, but still plodding on, until the Boers must have imagined them demons, so that, with terror at their heartstrings, they turned and fled from both battlefields. The naval force lost almost 50 per cent. of their number. Thus Methuen's men marched on, hungry, tired, thirsty, losing a battalion out of ten, but rushing at the foe three times in one week, though his haunt each time was a volcano's crater spewing lead. At Maaghersfontein the very men who lost the battle were those whose bravery

had earned them more celebrity than any troops in the British army—the Highlanders.

The rest of the army thanked God that the mishap had befallen those whose glorious records for valour left them best able of all who served the Queen to afford one such rebuff.

With all these natural advantages of position at his disposal, of what sort is the Boer himself in character and conduct? You must never think of him as a farmer, which he is not—any more than is any young Englishman or American who is ranching in the Bad Lands. The Boer is a cattle-herder, but this is so new a vocation of his that we must consider him as, first of all, a hunter. He was nothing else three or four decades ago—and more recently in some parts of his countries. He clings to his sporting-rifle to-day, and he longs to be a hunter solely, as his father was.

“The Boers have the great defect of all amateur soldiers,” wrote George W. Steevens from the Natal side early in the war: “they love their ease, and do not mean to be killed.” The Boer is an amateur soldier; but then, again, he is a natural soldier, and of his kind the best natural soldier in the world. He does not mean to be killed. He stays in battle as long as he can inflict harm, and then removes to a stronger position, previously agreed upon, as soon as the tide turns and he begins to receive damage. He did not follow these tactics at Paardeberg, but this was owing

to the stupidity of Cronje, who could not be made to believe that he was surrounded, and continued to wait for the frontal attack, which he had good reason to believe was the only mode of assault known to the British.

The Boer may love his ease, but he has most heroically restrained himself from taking it. In European military parlance he is a mounted infantry-man, and the lightest-riding, most mobile, that we know among civilised or semi-civilised peoples. In this war some of the same leaders and commandoes have frequently crossed and recrossed the Free State, now fighting Buller in Natal, now engaging French at Rensburg, and even combating or threatening Methuen at Modder and Maaghersfontein. This rapid work must have been done with only biltong in the saddle-bags, and with no transport. But that is not the Boer's favourite or characteristic mode of soldiering. He usually has a considerable transport near by, in which is carried not only plenty of good and varied fare, but often his women as well. It is not wise to believe anything a Boer says under any circumstances, for the Spartans never can have reduced theft to such a science as these singular people have developed the practice of lying, and yet I have heard this statement as to their comforts in such ways and with such details that I am inclined to think there is some basis for it.

The Boers seem not to know or to value the truth,

for they lie to one another, are lied to by their leaders, and are surfeited with lies by their newspaper organs. It is a condition so extraordinary that I cannot comprehend it, though every one in South Africa knows it to be true. I have seen the files of a Boer newspaper dating from the beginning of the war, and every battle report ended with "our loss was two killed and fifteen wounded," or "one killed, while the English dead covered the field." Kimberley's relief, Cronje's surrender, Ladysmith's freedom, were all denied, and at the same time the commandants told their fighting-men that Russia and England were at war, that Russia had seized a large part of India, and that 15,000 Russian troops had landed in Natal.

Since it is certain that "truth will prevail," and every lie about the war has to be retracted more or less quickly, I cannot understand the minds which at one and the same time indulge the practice and are duped by it. What this leads to is evident in the fighting habits of the Boer, so that these remarks are not of the nature of a digression. It leads to British soldiers being invited into a Dutch garden to help themselves to fruit, and then being shot at by Boers hiding in the garden. It leads to such incidents as that at Jacobsdal, where every garden wall vomited shot, and yet where, when the town was taken, the men came out—very many with Red Cross badges on their arms—to welcome our soldiers and tell them how glad they were that the



British were coming to give them good rule and honest rulers. It leads to an instance the exact opposite of that, in which, at a village near Ladybrand, Colonel Broadwood and his men, while scattering Lord Roberts's proclamation, were entertained at tea in the best houses, and were told that all the people were glad the British had come. Within the half-hour that the little band of British enjoyed the hospitality of the place, a galloper came in to warn Broadwood that several thousands of Boers were approaching. The colonel and his men leaped upon their horses and made a hasty escape, but, as they fled, from the windows and the garden walls the Boers who had welcomed them fusilladed them with rifle-fire. Both this practical form of deception and actual lying are included in the definition of the Boer word "slim." To be "slim" is the aim of every man of that much mixed blood. They openly boast of and glory in it. In a dictionary the word would stand thus:—

SLIM—Cunning, tricky, able to get the better of all with whom one has to do.

I have called the Boer a great natural soldier, but I suspect that what he is as a soldier is merely what he first became as a hunter. All his attributes are those of the clever stalker of wild and savage game. One trait that belongs to the born hunter he has lost—at least he has lost it in warfare—that is, his marksmanship. Considering the vast stores of cartridges he has burned in

this war, and taking into weighty account the fact that the British have always been the attacking party, usually approaching him in full view, it is amazing how small a percentage of men the British have lost. One of the universally circulated bits of knowledge of the Boer that has had to be unlearned is this, for at the outset the most that was urged in his behalf as a warrior was that he was an excellent marksman. He does shoot straight, but the modern magazine-rifle destroys marksmanship while the marksman uses it. When an enemy is approaching, and you can shoot at him as often as you can move your right forefinger, you are apt, if not certain, to prefer throwing a hail of shot rather than to take time for deliberate aim. It is simpler, easier, and more satisfactory to send a mass of lead into a mass of men—particularly when they are Britishers rushing toward you as if their khaki uniform covered bodies of tempered steel.

The inspection of half a dozen battle-fields immediately after their desertion by the Boers seems to show that the Boers may be classed under three groups, the Transvaaler, the Free Stater, and the wretchedly poor soldier—the last being common to both countries. It is a queer way to study people, but I began my studies among dead Boers, and, in a measure, have continued them with the same material. To describe the three sorts of Boers with a wide brush and a few strokes, as a cartoonist would, I should say that I pick out the

Transvaaler as the sturdy, tall, lithe, young man in homespun, or the burly, heavily-bearded elder in the same dress ; both rude, not caring for clothes except as covering, not trim, yet not very unkempt ; always vigorous, powerful, thick-necked, and stubborn-jawed. I decide those to be Free Staters who are of finer mould, softer skin, better dress, who even in death carry an atmosphere that connects them with the British colonists who are their neighbours. One notices a hint of ornament, the path of the razor, the signs of toll taken by the scissors from the hair and beard. Once I even saw a pair of gloved dead hands—the only gloves I've ever seen worn by "Brother Boer." And then there are the dreadful-looking poor. Brutish they look when one sees them marching to prison, with cunning little eyes set only a finger-breadth apart, as baboons' eyes are put, with long, matted beards and knotted hair. The memory of some of these whom I have seen dead will cling to me till I follow them.

At first I thought that these dreadful-looking poorer Boers were servants or ranch-hands. I have not yet quite cleared this up, but I am told that they more nearly correspond to the poor whites of the Southern States of America than to any other people. They may work on the ranches kraaling and feeding the cattle and horses, and doing the chores ; or they may be simply squatters who have settled upon a ranch, built themselves a hutch-like sort of cabin, and never been dis-

turbed by the ranch-owner. For I am told that always, when misfortune overwhelms a typical Boer of the genuine stripe, he gives up ambition, but clings to his rifle and to the land he once owned, upon which he squats and remains undisturbed. The existence of this class completes and perfects the resemblance which I early noticed between the Boers of the two republics and the mountain folk in West Virginia. Whenever I have seen a throng of Boers my mind has gone back to memorable days spent in the Blue Ridge mountains a few years ago, and to a village festival which brought together the people of the valleys and hills from far and near. The Boers are heavier men, and in advanced years grow portly, but otherwise the type is much the same, and I should say that the social and intellectual grade is nearly identical in the two regions. Both races are bearded, and wear the same sort of rough-and-ready shop-made clothes; both live out-door lives on the backs of horses; both keep their rifles handy, in simple homes which are arranged and appointed in surprisingly similar style.

Some of the well-to-do Free State Boers used to drive to battle in their Cape carts, a luxurious practice of which I never heard anywhere else, and which wholly justifies the late Mr. Steevens's happy designation of them as "amateur soldiers." When they had slain as many British as they thought possible, and the tide of victory was setting against them, they rolled

back to their ranches in their comfortable carts (for a Cape cart is a very roomy, heavy, two-wheeled carriage of somewhat the pattern of an old-time chaise or gig), or, more often, upon the fleet spare horse which they had led behind them in the morning. I saw this at Belmont and at Graspan; and there, also, I first saw the wolfish, tangle-bearded, wretchedly poor dead whom I have described. I inferred, from their being the only dead on the kopjes, that the poor wretches, whose surroundings showed that they had lived and slept in their rocky crannies for weeks, were labourers, and had been commanded to stay there, to continue a hopeless fight, and to mask the retreat of the others.

I know better now, and what I have learned reveals one of the most peculiar habits of the Boer in battle. They were left lying dead where they were killed because they were poor, and because they had no relatives in the commando, at least none who was able to carry their bodies away. Understand that the British find very few dead on the field, even after the hottest battle. This is because a Boer who dies in battle falls among his people and they carry his body away. He has his brothers, sons, uncles, or cousins fighting by his side, and it is as if he fell on his own ranch. Immediately one of his relations takes away the body. The bodies that are left—and none are left unless the field is vacated by sudden flight—are the always-despised foreigners, and those who have no kin at hand to care for them.

From a kopje on one of Methuen's battle-fields we saw the dead being thrown over the saddles of the living, and one officer declared that he saw a dead Boer lifted upon his horse and held there by another man, who rode away holding up the corpse with one hand. At Maaghersfontein a friendly woman who lived on the veldt behind the Boer position declared that the dead were carried past her house all day during the long and bitter fight. On that battle-ground I found many new graves, into which, without doubt, the despised Hollanders, French, Germans, and Scandinavians were tumbled hastily; while others were sunk in the Riet River, which joins the Modder at that battlefield. One gathers from the systematic deception practised by their leaders upon the Boers with regard to their losses in battle, that this instant removal of the dead by various means is intended to deceive their own soldiers, quite as much as to conceal the truth from the British.

I speak of the Boer's disrespect for foreigners in his own ranks because so many facts attest it. The Scandinavians who were captured at Maaghersfontein told us they had never been kindly treated by the Boers. An American who is a burgher and fought against the British told me that the Boer distrusts every foreigner, including the Hollander. Another burgher, in a Boer home and surrounded by a Boer family, assured me that Albrecht was the only foreigner whom the Boers respected. Him they trusted because he had



lived so long with them—yet his speech was always half Taal and half German. Poor gallant Villebois, who, though misguided, was sincere, suffered continual rudeness at the hands of his comrades. When, at Jacobsdal, he warned Cronje that he was being flanked by the British, the obstinate old fighting rancher replied, "The British will never leave the railway." And when Villebois persisted, the half-savage Cronje said to him in coarse language, what can be clumsily refined in this sentence: "Shut up! I was a soldier when you were a baby." Subsequently the grim old guerilla is said to have torn up Villebois's plan for the recapture of Kimberley after the paper had been approved by the Kriegsraad.

To return now to the war itself, we have seen that the first halt all along the line was apparently without a break to let in the light of hope. Field-Marshal Lord Roberts soon ended that crisis, and set every one of four armies in motion. He darted from Modder Station to take in Kimberley with one arm and to encircle Cronje's force with the other, though the Boer force melted down, by night escapes, to one-half its original size before it surrendered. Then the magician "Bobs," as the soldiers love to call him ("the Little Man" is the affectionate phrase of the officers), pushed on to Bloemfontein, fighting practically all the way, and winning everywhere.



The stay-at-home critics do not know how many British horses died on the last march, or how fagged were those that survived; not every one remembers what a large amount of stores and waggons the army lost at Waterfall Drift, or how difficult it was to get more waggons, nor could those at a distance see the veldt which lay all around us—a new veldt to us; no longer baked and swept by “dust devils,” but a spongy, stodgy bog of a veldt, drenched by daily torrents. Lord Roberts’s horses would not last four days at pulling a convoy through that mud.

Furthermore, the 7,000 Boers who incautiously went south of Bloemfontein a week after the capital was taken had to be surrounded and sent to St. Helena if possible before the army started, for then, as Lord Roberts said, “there will be so many the less to get in front of us.” No one questions or doubts “Bobs” in the British army. His place is unique there—and in all the world besides.

In all the world no other hero has the unshaken confidence, affection, and praise of so many men. It is not merely the private soldier who is wholly satisfied simply to be led by him. The feeling is the same among the officers. He has infinite tact because he is in complete sympathy with every man in or above the ranks. He returns every salute; he talks to every sort of soldier; he knows them by name by the hundred. He is more profuse in kind words and compliments

than in reproof, just as he is most inclined to be gentle and kindly, yet every man knows how firm and severe he can be. In those two sentences lies the definition of perfect justice, which he nearly personifies. He makes so little show and parade that there is no plainer man among his 200,000; and yet he is always as neat as a pin; a straight-built, solidly set up, quick, nervous little man, with bright eyes under a majestic forehead and above a masterful chin. His face is so sad and gentle when it is in repose that you have to look at it again and again—and then only to add to your wonder how that can be the visage of a man who deals death for a profession, and leads to death the flower of the army he loves. Look at the same face again when he is speaking, giving orders. It is just as kindly, but the melancholy has fled, and in its place is the indefinable tracery called “command.”

At Dreefontein he came out to where the naval battery was, and sat down on a camp-stool brought for him by his Indian attendant. He spoke to the officer in command of the battery cheerily, and now and then he asked the younger officers a question. All the time he was smiling and looking most pleased, though, for its size, there has not been a hotter battle in the war. Gallopers and staff-officers came and went, bringing news and taking away orders. “Tell Colonel So-and-so to move a little forward, and to the left.” “Say that I wish So-and-so would push forward.” It was all

as quietly and calmly said and done, there in the heat of battle and within range of the enemy's guns—as calmly and quietly done as ever a bank-manager issued orders to his clerks on a dull afternoon. And, just as suddenly as he came, the Field-Marshal sprang up and walked away, with the Indian attendant and the chair at his heels.

He trusts every one implicitly until he finds himself mistaken in any man, then it is not comfortable to be in that man's shoes. He is never angry. He controls his temper as he does his appetite, for he never smokes, and drinks hardly at all. He lives, in war, as plainly as any colonel under him, to say the least. Beyond and behind and above all else that distinguishes him is this: that though he is a general among men, he counts himself, before God, a humble soldier, for, without ever intruding the fact, he is a devout Christian.

I think that Lord Methuen is another really religious man. I am quite sure he is a very good man, and as high a type of the courteous and polished gentleman as the army contains. Next to that—and, some may say, above it—he is distinguished for a degree of bravery which leads one to imagine that he would fight a lion with a pocket-knife rather than show the animal his back. I used to think, when I was attached to his command, that he was braver than a general ought to show himself, so often did he risk being killed or wounded, even on days of rest, when he persisted in

going to the outposts to study his and the enemy's position. At Modder River he made at least two attempts to lead his men across the stream under heavy fire, and there, you remember, he was wounded.

It is impossible here to describe the characteristics of all the British leaders. Really there was but one leader as soon as "Little Bobs" came out. Even a name which once filled the world was then eclipsed by his, for he alone commanded—and absolutely.

## CHAPTER II

### AN INVISIBLE ENEMY

IT has been shown that the chief obstacle to a quick success of the British arms in South Africa in 1899-1900 was not the enemy but his country, which is the most easily defended, most naturally and plentifully fortified land on earth; offering a fort and sometimes many forts or breastworks or dongahs in almost every square mile—in every few miles certainly. The Boers, possessing this natural advantage, made the best of it by seldom offering to attack, but hiding behind these ready-made positions of defence, and forcing the British to attack them—always in and from the open. I have already attempted to show that their land was a more effectual opponent to the British army than all their men and arms and marksmanship.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the defensive value of the fortress-like kopjes, and rock-strewn ground, and dry river-beds, combined with the trying character of the climate and the scarcity of water—both terrible hindrances to the British rather than to the Boers, who were used to meeting these conditions;

but the most formidable, awesome, soul-and-mind-straining feature of the war was the enemy's invisibility. Some one else should attempt to do justice to this—some one with greater skill at word-painting, with a richer gift of illustration and genius for choosing similes; some one, if such there be, who unites the poetic with the practical, and who could render the emotions of the souls and minds of the English soldiery, while picturing the outward features of the weird, one-sided fields of combat.

I saw many men all but crazed by their inability to discern the Boers who were pelting them with lead—made mad by the inequality and unfairness of the fighting, stirred to rush like maniacs or devils straight at the hidden enemy, regardless of death, and bent only upon forcing their assailants out from cover. I saw one man—too imaginative to endure the unending tension of this uncanny relation between himself and the Boers—who was wrecked physically after his nervous system had already broken down. "Give a man a rifle in battle, and his nervousness will disappear," is an old saying, but he altered it to "give me a sight of a Boer to shoot at, or I shall go mad!"

Fancy, if you can, what it must have meant to an army to go on and on fighting nothing—nothing visible, nothing substantial, nothing to aim at—and yet a nothing that spat Mauser balls, a nothing that slew with explosive bullets, and shrapnel, and common shell!

Fancy the feelings of the 8,000 men of Methuen's force lying for twelve hours under a galling, deadly fire at Modder River, and never seeing a Boer or knowing where the Boers were! It was as if they were always shooting over the curve of the earth.

We shudder at the awful trap and surprise set for the Highlanders when, at Maaghersfontein, the black darkness of the last minutes of a stormy night vomited death messengers which slew them as the sickle slays grass; but, after all, this was but a slight exaggeration of the usual conditions of all the battles on the veldt. There was daylight in other engagements, but it very seldom exposed the enemy—the stealthy hunter who went to war upon his human foes precisely as he and his ancestors had for centuries preyed upon the wild game of that land.

When, therefore, we compare such warfare with fighting a vapour or an essence, the comparison is a just one. But for the fact that the bullets sang as mosquitoes do in their flight, death came as if from the glances of eyes which were hid in invisible bodies. It was as if the soldiers were slain by some materialised portion of the light of the sun, which permeates the atmosphere and is not distinguishable from it. Suddenly, as the armies marched upon a prairie on which a tiny deer could be detected miles away, there came the ominous crackle as of frying fat, the faint high-keyed song of the bullets and—the tumbling of



the dead and wounded. Thus a battle began. The British lay as flat upon mother earth as they could stretch themselves, and fired—what at? At some bushes, at some rocks, at a ridge of ground, at whatever seemed a likely lurking place for an enemy, which might have been recruited from the gnomes or the shades of the dead—which might have been composed of the rays of Röntgen light, or the bodiless, unseen currents of the wireless telegraph.

“Who is this riding toward us—a Boer?” “If you can see him, he is no Boer,” was sure to be the reply of any man with our army. “Spare the solitary horseman on the skyline. He is bound to be a Britisher,” are words which Rudyard Kipling wrote among his “Kopje-book maxims” in *The Friend*, a newspaper which we shall presently describe.

Just before one battle the British saw a band of Boers who showed themselves on the veldt as a decoy—and, because they saw them, they would not believe that they were Boers. They fought, as a rule, behind the rocks on the veldt, behind the rocks on the kopjes, in little one-man fortresses of stone, in indistinguishable trenches in the grassland, in nullahs, spruits, and riverbeds, and behind garden walls. When they ran they descended the farther sides of the hills, or they slipped into the great rifts in the earth which abound on the veldt, and which swallowed them out of sight, and gave them invisibility for miles.



This was the chief and most awful peculiarity of that war. The British dealt with a demonish, unsubstantial enemy. They shot without targets, while exposing themselves in the boldest bulk and outline always. They were slain by men they could not see, firing bullets whose source they could only guess at roughly. The summons to nearly every battle was a volley as unexpected and mysterious as if the air had exploded in front and shot its hardened particles into the ranks. It was all too uncanny. It worked upon the nerves. It kept the men under such a strain as no armies have ever suffered elsewhere or before.

It may console the British to know that they have had an experience and training which leaves the rest of the armies of Europe green and ignorant beside them. It may give them rightful pride to think that they have endured what no other fighting men have known. But it was an awful, straining, cruel, and demonish thing—this fighting the air, this shooting at nothing—this being killed by those who would not let you see where or how to drive death back upon them.

## CHAPTER III

### THE VELDT AND ITS PEOPLE

THE surface of the veldt where the British fought under Methuen is a thousand miles of baked earth profusely littered with stones. Hills are flung all over it as if it had once boiled and these were the bubbles. These hills, called kopjes (copies) are from 100 to 1,000 feet high, and some are all speckled with sage brush, while others are mere heaps of boulders. Everything is khaki-coloured except the rocks, which are usually black. River-beds as dry as a bone in a furnace are very plentiful, and so are other smaller gutters, called "sluits," where water flows in the rainy season. Water, the scarcest thing on the veldt, is a terrible scourge there—a cruel, destructive force. When it is present, it is so abundant as to be useless and unmanageable; and then it tears and rends its way, like a thing possessed of devils, into the sea, and is gone.

A large part of this strange tract is called the Karroo Desert, and is inhabited by very few persons except the Kaffirs in their round huts of bent saplings covered

with matting. These appear to be usually near the railway, and the men and women are seen to wear clothing as a homage to the white men, which is not paid where the negroes live in numbers by themselves. A bead-worked belt around the loins, and a very much abbreviated beginning of a breech-clout suffice to meet their own ideas of comfort and modesty. It was not so very long ago that in every well-to-do Boer house a perfectly nude Kaffir handmaiden of from fifteen to twenty-five years came into the *sitz kammer*, or sitting-room to wash the feet of the men just before bedtime. She brought a basin, soap, and towel, and attended to the eldest guest first, then to the next in age, and so on to the family. To-day the custom is dead and the handmaiden is clothed cap-à-pie.

Once in a great while on the veldt you see some trees, three or four times, it may be, during a day's ride. When a long, thin line of greenery comes within sight, you know that you are approaching a wet river, for there are few rivers like the Orange, Modder, and Riet, which always keeps a little water in them, except in the rainy season, when they overflow their banks, and race along like mountain torrents. Like the Mississippi, Missouri, and Ohio, they carry chocolate-coloured water, which is not any the less wholesome for drinking though it is mere mud in solution. If you see but a bunch or short line of trees, you know you are approaching a Boer farmhouse. There is always water

near such a homestead, which accounts for the trees; these are, usually, three or four poplars in front of the house, and a cloud of foliage nearby where there is an enclosure of fig, mulberry, and peach trees, and a patch of "mealies," or Indian corn, raised from American seed. The water is generally what is called a dam, but that word in Africa really means a stone-walled reservoir, or a natural depression in the earth which catches and stores water during the heavy rains.

From a distance I do not know of any dwelling more attractive and inviting than a Boer house; this is because the veldt is so hot and brown and naked that the sight of a white homestead set about with trees makes the heart leap and the pulses beat, just as a similar sight does in Turkey, Persia, or Arabia, and for the same reason. These Boer houses, made of sun-dried brick and whitened over outside, are very Asiatic-looking. I am back in the far East every time I see one. But don't expect too much of them or you will be cruelly disappointed. They prove to be mere oblong boxes punctured for doors and windows. They contain an ample kitchen, a family sleeping-room, and a sitting-room. The more modern ones now contain extra sleeping-rooms for the grown-up children, but in the older houses and among the old-fashioned Boers there is but one sleeping-room for the family, whose members sleep in their trousers or petticoats, according to their sex.

For literature, the Boer has, first and mainly, his Bible, and next, a lot of patent-medicine almanacs, obtained, like his pictures, free at the nearest *winkle* or store. If he is very progressive, he may take a Dutch newspaper. What that means you may judge when I tell you that I have a friend who spent six months in travel in the Transvaal, and at the end of that time read an allusion to the siege of Paris. The Franco-Prussian war was at an end, and he had never seen any other mention of it.

They are up by daybreak, and the man is out on horseback superintending the turning out of his cattle. Bedtime comes soon after sundown, when supper is finished, a chapter of the Bible has been read, and all have knelt in prayer; for the Boer is a strange anomaly—a pious creature who gets his inspiration from the Old Testament rather than from the New, and who does with as little morality as is possible. He reserves the time immediately after prayers for retailing to his frau all his sharp practices of the day; for to get the best of a man in trade, by no matter what trickery, is the proudest achievement of the burgher. “Fear God, honour your parents, keep out of debt, and cheat the English,” has been the warning drilled into every Boer boy’s head during the last hundred years.

They are of a very much-mixed blood, and the infusion of the negro has strangely overcome the love of cleanliness and tidiness which was so strong in the

original pure Dutch stock. It has also obliterated the Hollandish taste for gardening and love of flowers. Short of a darkey cabin in the Southern States, I have never seen such slatternly surroundings as those of the Boer homes that I had visited—nine in all when this was written—in one prosperous section of the Free State. No house has one of those retiring places which we would imagine could not be dispensed with. But these are trifles, like the fact that the Boers get along without stockings or socks.

They are called “farmers” and their countries are spoken of as “the farmer republics,” but they are simply cattle-breeders, and their farms are really cattle ranges. A farm among the Boers is an immense tract—16,000 acres as a rule, I believe, though many men own many farms of that size. A whole valley, or even two great connected valleys, will often constitute a farm, every foot of which is the simple, unaltered veldt, except the little barbed-wire enclosure containing the fruit trees and the patch of corn. I speak now of what I have seen. I am told that in richer, better-watered districts some acres of corn are regularly planted by the farmers; enough for their own use, not for market.

The frequent ant-hills are most curious, round-topped mounds of brick-red earth, which, every here and there, pimple the parched prairie. They look like so many big red balls cut in half and strewn over the veldt.

The ants build these hillocks or domes, which average two to three feet in height and the same width at the bottom. They are made of the soil, which the ants have rid of its sand, and they are cellular or honey-combed inside. The action of rain and dew gives them an almost shell-like outer surface. You may stand upon them, and thousands of British soldiers have lain behind them in battle, imagining that they afford protection from bullets, but they have no solidity. The wheel of a light waggon will cut through them as if they were made of green cheese. They are of interest in that they reveal one of the strange and subtle ways of nature. The ants bring up this best part of the earth, and when they have built their houses of it, the ant-bears come at night and tear them to bits, so that the winds and water may scatter the material over the sandy surface of the veldt.

The ants appear to me no different from those we have at home, but the ant-bear is a strange beast indeed. He is, when full-grown, about three feet long and nearly as tall, and it is said that his fore-legs are the most powerful limbs, in proportion to his size, which are possessed by any creature now existing. His method is to use his front paws to rend an ant-hill open. This done, he lies down and pushes in among its cells a long, sticky tongue—a yard or more of it; a tongue which has the chameleon's power of changing its colour to match whatever it rests upon. The mucilaginous stuff



on its surface is considered delicious by the ants, who crowd upon the member and stick there. When his tongue is encrusted with these insects, the creature draws it into his mouth and swallows its living freight. He is a formidable-looking animal, but never attacks mankind.

The veldt abounds with animals and birds, and it is a strange thing that we see them in the greatest number during a battle. At such a time the ant-bears and the myriad meer-cats, which are a sort of squirrel, hide in their holes in the ground; but the several varieties of small deer, the partridges, pheasants, and huge bustards, and vultures called *aasvogels* find themselves driven into the open centre of each battlefield between the opposing armies. I do not think a battle was fought under Methuen during which I have not seen droves of steenbok (a deer the size of a half-grown kid) rushing wildly at and through our lines. Snakes, scorpions, tarantulas, and great repulsive spiders are so common that I have killed five scorpions in my tent in a single morning—so common as to keep us all and always on our guard when we are lying down. They are all venomous, but I do not think they are nearly as likely to kill with their bites and stings as those similar insects and reptiles that are found in the East and West Indies, and elsewhere.

The most extraordinary characteristic of this country is the weather. There is more weather, and there are



more kinds of it, than any one would care to remember, unless he had to write about it. For instance, it is fiendishly hot all day because the veldt is between 4,000 and 6,000 feet above the sea, and the air is rarified and the sun blazes right through it. For the same reason it grows chilly half an hour after sunset, and colder and colder through each hour as the earth throws off its heat. By two o'clock in the morning you need all the blankets and furs you can heap on you, just as at two o'clock in the afternoon you would throw off your skin if you could. The saving thing about both extremes of weather is that the climate is dry, for dryness always modifies the effect of both heat and cold.

At times we had rain every day or two, always in the afternoon, and nature goes at the job of making rain as if it was a very difficult and complicated operation. She does not float a few dark bags of water overhead, and then empty them out on the earth, as is her usual method. Not at all. What she does is to begin getting up a "Dust Devil," the most horrid, maddening, and outrageous form of persecution that I have ever suffered. As you sit looking over the veldt early of an afternoon, you suddenly see a little corkscrew-shaped column of dust whirling in front of you. It is so small that you could put a barrel over it when it begins. I wonder no one has ever thought of doing this. But it whirls and grows, and grows and whirls, until the first thing you know it is as big as a tent, and something

near the same shape, except that the point at the top may reach straight up in a long brown thread sixty or eighty feet high. Well, it whirls and grows, and grows and whirls, until it is half an acre in size and has begun to pick up big planks, and men's coats, and hats, and heavy waterproof waggon covers, and to fling them around in its outermost circle. At last, when it has become a full-grown devil, it turns right about and makes for the camp. Every one, except the sentries, rushes for shelter and all find that shelter from such a demon is unavailing. It squeezes its dust under tents, into windows, through crannies and cracks, between the doors and their frames. It sifts through outer clothes and under clothes, and paints every man's skin khaki-coloured. It forces its way under the lids of the cooking pots, aye, it drives itself into the watch in your pocket and clogs its wheels. In five minutes it has gone, and then—we have an hour of dust-storm which is the same thing, except that it drives straight ahead and does not whirl around.

Then come the thunder and lightning—real able-bodied thunder and lightning—the “pucker” thing, as they say in India, or “number one proper,” as it would be called in China. I hope the wicked will experience nothing worse hereafter. Crash! comes the thunder, and always on the same instant as a flash comes which seems to singe your eyeballs. Very soon the heavens open, and the rain comes down in torrents,

with more thunder and lightning to punctuate the showers. It rains in such an enthusiastic, high-spirited, wholesale fashion that each storm puts the rivers in flood. Whenever we saw the shallow stream, the Modder, suddenly choking with liquified mud, rushing along at twelve miles an hour, and playing havoc with ferries and pontoons, we knew that there had been a deluge somewhere in the Free State.

In the morning the weather is staid and calm. It is just red-hot under a blazing sun, but otherwise orderly and respectable. That is when the locusts prefer to make their excursions. They, also, are khaki-coloured, like everything else, and they come at the rate of 11,897,652,423 per second. They make nature look as if an unprecedented storm of brown snow was raging. The mere flutter of their wings—the hum of their flying—makes a noise like the sound of a distant waterfall. They obscure the sky, they keep dropping on the earth to rest, until it is carpeted with their bodies. They hold a mortgage on creation while they are passing along.

## CHAPTER IV

### A DAY OF MODERN WAR

It is only half-past four o'clock in the morning when we are drinking our cocoa and munching our biscuits. We have been roused two hours earlier than this when going to battle, which we do not expect now, for Spytfontein, where the Boers are supposed to be, is fifteen miles away, and eleven miles is the longest march we have yet taken in a day.

Already the sun is beginning to exert the scorching strength it possesses in summer time on the veldt. It has risen, and has become a fire in the east. Tommy Atkins, always buttoned to the throat, bandaged to the insteps, and coated to the wrists, is beginning to strap himself up in the harness of a horse—of a cart-horse, mind you, not the far lighter trappings of a carriage-horse. Over his shoulders and down his breast, across his back and around his waist, he is fitting—always with the help of a comrade—the complexity of quarter-inch straps and quarter-pound buckles which he must wear because Wellington's soldiers wore them. Upon this brutal harness hang the cartridge-pouches,

water-bottle, haversack, bayonet sheath, and in some cases the shovels which heavy-laden fighting men must carry. Except that one knew that soldiers can get used to anything—even death—one never could comprehend how they survived such a rig in such a climate.

It was quite an object lesson in accoutrements when there came to this same army certain Australians, and New Zealanders, and men of Canada called Strathcona's Horse, who did their share with the regulars, and yet were costumed as sensibly as so many cowboys, in light wide hats, with bandoliers at angles for their cartridges—free and easy, supple and ready for everything. Such was the gear of Rimington's Tigers or "Night Cats." And the days were to come when we were to see hundreds of men at work in fixed camps in their shirt-sleeves; aye, and one of us was to have a British colonel say to him, "how good the boys feel at being able to shed their coats! Why on earth could they not have fought their battles so, as the Americans did in Cuba? What damned nonsense old countries do perpetrate!"

It must have been half-past five o'clock when we began the forward march in a very wide mass, though only one battalion deep, except where the convoy trailed after the Lancers or the Guards on the right, and the Field and Horse Artillery bumped their guns behind us of the Ninth Brigade in the centre and left.

It was a beautiful sight to see ; the long, thin, skirmish-line ahead, and half a mile back the General and his staff ; then the battalions in quarter-column formation, each led by its colonel and one or two of his officers. Every man was in khaki, and the cannons were coloured like the men. At dusk you could not have seen us a quarter of a mile away, and now in broad day I doubt if any of us were visible—except the Lancers, who had not then learned to paint or sheathe their glancing lance-points—anything like a mile off.

Everybody swung along as if on parade, the officers keeping their horses at a walk and looking idly to the right and left, the men striding sturdily with chins up, but chaffing and sending repartee to and fro, in low voices, as shuttles are sent across a steam loom. The transport came along soberly and quietly almost for the first time in South African warfare. The way ahead was over slightly rising ground, uplifted at the distant river and sloping down to us, but it appeared to be level.

Say what you will and think what you may of the Intelligence Department and the scouts, it is nevertheless true that the army did not know they were going into battle. While they loafed a day by the muddy pan behind they were told that a few Boers—about three hundred—were entrenched before a little village a few miles ahead. They also heard that the Mounted Infantry would be able to do for them, and that the

army would find no Boers there when it came to the place. Presently they halted.

The army halted a long time—more than half an hour—and then again trudged ahead. Two war correspondents were riding well forward when they suddenly realised that a small dark patch far ahead and on the right of the field was composed of horsemen. Spurring their horses and taking out their field-glasses they advanced until their view was better still. They saw that the horsemen—from three hundred to five hundred in number—were obviously bent upon attracting attention. They broke up into several bands which dashed about to the right and left only to close together again and ride away slowly in one body. The glasses of the correspondents showed that these were men in motley garb, clothed in suits of many cuts and colours, as would be the case if they were the peasantry or farmers of any countryside. They were Boers. It was difficult to realise, for the Boers had never shown themselves to us, and these men were not only revealing themselves, but in an unmistakably impudent manner. The correspondents rode back and met a colonel and a scout riding at the head of a battalion. “Those are Boers,” said the correspondents. The self-confident colonel replied that they could not be Boers. The correspondents insisted, saying that they had seen them to be Boers. The colonel appealed to the scout who rode beside him. “There are not so many Boers within a



dozen miles," said the scout; "I have been all over that region only yesterday. The Boers are waiting for us at Spytfontein behind the Maaghersfontein hills yonder. The men you saw are our Mounted Infantry."

It is impossible to say how such a recital affects the non-military reader, but to the soldiers, who marched and fought and waged a war amid the fog and uncertainty of such conditions, the strain of the situation became almost unbearable.

The correspondents saw the Boers put spurs to their horses, saw the Mounted Infantry appear behind in quick pursuit, saw the Ninth Lancers and a Field Battery follow. They, too, forged after the others, leaving the army of infantry still parading along, but presently finding themselves in the heat of the battle of Modder River.

It was here, for the first time in the experience of the armies operating on the western side of the continent, that the Boers left their kopjes and took to trenches in the veldt—amazed and alarmed by the truly awesome courage of the British in rushing up the steep hills against sheets of bullets, undismayed and undeterred by whatever toll death collected from their ranks. One who has watched them through seven months of the war feels the right to declare with confidence that the Boers have no courage of the sort we Anglo-Saxons know and exercise. Moreover, they detest it in others. Every foreigner in the Boer forces who has discussed



the matter has said that he found his usefulness to them crippled because the Boers would never attack, never expose themselves in the open, would only fight lying down and hidden behind something. Most, if not all, foreigners who allied themselves with the Boers have had a disagreeable experience, because these people distrust all strangers, resent their offers of advice, and are rendered highly uncomfortable by the extraordinary and, in their eyes, mad tendency of all other white men to risk their skins and lives unnecessarily in battle. Albrecht, as we have seen, was so well known that he was allowed to advise, command, and lead a commando of the Boer forces. But even he used to risk his unique place among them by deliberately standing up in battle.

The British fought for nearly twelve hours in baking heat, and with never a sight of the enemy after that first impudent appearance of the few on horseback in the early morning—at least with never a sight of them except at a little point on the extreme left, where, as Colonel Barter led a band of his Yorkshires and some Lancashire and Argyle men across the Modder, a few Boers were seen clambering over the walls of some gardens and kraals to leap upon their horses and be gone. One longs for the art of a Hugo to paint in all its weird and uncanny lights and phases the sensations of an army which fights an unseen foe during an entire day, feeling its ranks decimated by missiles that come from no one knows where, and which men of more imagina-

tion than the rank and file possess might fancy to be an essence or deadly vapour in the atmosphere. We saw the rude line of trees and bushes which skirted the river, and from its neighbourhood we knew that the sound of the enemy's rifles proceeded; but the very great majority of us did not know, even at the close of the fight, on which side of the water the enemy was entrenched.

That sound of the rifle fire! It was not only the fiercest, most multitudinous volleying that, in all probability, had ever been heard upon this earth, but it was so long maintained—during so many hours—that the mere strain of having to listen to it, and of hearing the equally continuous whistlings of innumerable bullets, became to some of us well-nigh unendurable. It has been roughly estimated that something like a million and a half of cartridges were used jointly by the two armies; and yet comparatively few men were killed and wounded. In that battle we had it forced upon us to conclude either that the latter-day Boer is not a good marksman, or that the modern magazine-rifle is destructive of good marksmanship. We fancy that the English private is a better shot, and certainly he has had some, but not nearly enough, drilling in the use of the new weapon at target practice, just as the Boer had in the handling of the sporting-rifle in days that are gone. But in this way the Boer, slapping in his "clip" of cartridges, and having only to move a finger a few

times in order to empty his piece, assuredly shoots wildly in the ranks, and leaves most of the damage to be done by his sharpshooters, who pot at individuals and are condemnedly clever at it.

In some way, more by the nature of circumstances than by any quicker mode, that dreadful day came to an end at last. Dusk came, a few of the British crossed the river and raised a cheer, the Boers fled, and their sharpshooters covered their retreat with firing that went on until dark. Never was night blacker! A burning house on the northern or Boers' side of the river illuminated a tiny bit of the veldt. Elsewhere a black blanket covered all nature. All day thousands of men had been gnawingly hungry, and thirsty beyond the power of description. It is said that when the Boers ran away scores, perhaps hundreds, of the British, who had been lying prone in the sun all day, broke for the river and waded in it, scooping up the water in helmetfuls for a drink.

Not many days after this came the terrible surprise at Maaghersfontein, which was described in detail in my first volume on the war.

## CHAPTER V

### TOLD IN MUSIC BY THE PIPES

MORNING upon morning for weeks the very earliest sound upon the veldt was the opening groan of a bag-pipe, the reveille of one of the Highland battalions.

Do you know that first note of the pipe when the wind is beginning to rush out of the bag and through the "chanter" even before the bag is filled, and when the piper is adjusting the bag to his body, and his fingers to the stops?

It is a weird, long-drawn, shapeless note, a nasal groan, a chord of agony wrung from the nose of barbaric harmony. It always precedes a tune as the piper tries himself and his instrument before launching into his flight of melody. Every morning it was that protesting note of the pipes next door which roused the Wessex Fusiliers and me. It was like the snoring of the Scotch elder during church service, of which the whole congregation complained because it wakened them all.

And yet it was different, for, once the pipes began,

they never had a rest the livelong day and part of the night. As far into the night as nine o'clock and later, long after the Fusiliers were put to bed by general orders, the pipes still wheezed and groaned, or—as a Scotchman would say—frolicked with or wept out their gay or their plaintive airs.

The pipes put me through several moods and changes of mind in those long weeks of waiting.

At first, the abundance of their queer music—of which I had heard but little up till then—came as a novelty. Next, they roused my curiosity as to how a piper could have either the will or the strength to play for sixteen hours on end without a longer pause than the minute it required to change from one tune to another. And, next, the unceasing noise annoyed until it maddened me, and I cursed the pipes as an instrument of torture. The piper walked to and fro, the length of the regiment's lines, and, at a distance, the air was full of a "ziz-ziz-ziz," like the note of a demon bee, while the nearer it came the more its nasal chords mastered the neighbourhood, and quivered in my very bones.

At the last (I cannot tell why or how it came about) I grew to like the sound, and to miss the melody when the piper was afar, and only the buzzing came to my ears. When he was near he played upon my body and my senses. My pen raced with the purple music of the reels, my blood warmed under the defiant, chal-

lenging, scarlet chords of the battle songs ; a pleasant sadness possessed me when the tunes were plaintive and grey.

Without a drop of Scotch blood in me, I yet began to love the Scotch, and to take interest in all that I could see and learn of them. With nothing to connect me with their land—except that my father once attended a course of medical lectures in Edinburgh—I yet could feel the pipes move me and my heart go out toward their players.

In time I used to leave my camp and cross the narrow lane to the canvas village of the Highlanders, in order to watch a piper at his work.

And lo ! I discovered that instead of one man being the sole piper, a score of men shared his work. These stood in line silently listening and watching as the musician of the moment strode jauntily up and down, giving to his hips that swaggering, boastful, swaying movement which your true master of the bag and reeds never fails to practise. They looked at him for hours, now hungrily, now gloatingly, as he stepped to and fro, just touching his toes to the veldt like a man practising to walk on eggs—like one whose body is lifted with his soul by the music he creates. For hours, I say, but in every hour at least two different men were the players. Those who watched were waiting their turns, and ever and anon the player of the moment halted, the flying ribbons fell beside the

“drones,” and the pipe was passed to another man in the patient line.

Then off strode the fresh player with the streamers floating from his pipes, with his hips swaying, his head held high, and his toes but touching the earth. Once I heard a man say, “gi’ me the pipes, Sandy ; I can tell ye what naebody has said ”—at least, those were the strange words I thought that I distinguished.

What I was certain of was that I had discovered why it seemed that the regimental piper played steadily for sixteen hours a day.

I learned that there are other things about the Scotch which marked them apart from the English. For instance, their regimental discipline has not yet transformed the Scotch “T. Atkins ” to an automaton. He thinks undisciplined thoughts, and then speaks them aloud, for one thing. Strong traces of a feudal relationship between the officers and men lead them to speak to each other with some freedom—and even to converse. And on St. Andrew’s Day, I am told, the men go the round of their officers’ tents, visiting, to remind them of the hallowed day, and to be asked to drink in honour of it.

I even heard of the men of one Highland regiment calling upon an officer whom they detested, rather than mar the custom or lose a drink. “Good evening to you, Captain MacTavish,” said the spokesman of one convivial band, “we maun tell ye that nane o’ us



like ye—in fact, ye're detested by nearly every one, for ye're unco hard—and ye're a dour man—but we'll tak a wee bit drink wi' you—on account o' the day."

But all this is a digression. We were dealing with the pipes.

I fell to studying the Scotsmen and their music after a battle in which the Highlanders had met with a great calamity. For weeks they were low-spirited and unsocial, even with one another. Such is their temperament—a brave and gay one, but with a substratum of melancholy which will, at times, come uppermost.

"I should not like to crack a joke at our mess," said to me at this time an officer of theirs who was not wholly Scotch. "It would sound profane, and my fellow-officers would surely think me mad or idiotic. I suggested champagne the other night at dinner, and I'll not do that again until we get back our spirits. The men are in the same mood as the officers. It is the pipes that make them so. The pipes are keeping them a great deal resentful, and still more melancholy."

"The pipes?" I echoed, inquiringly. "What have the pipes to do with their feelings?"

"Eh, man? Don't you know that the pipes can talk as good Scotch as any man who hears them? Surely 'tis so—and 'tis what the pipes are saying, first in one player's hands and then in another's, that keeps the men from forgetting their part in the last battle."

Later, as the days passed, when I saw this officer



again at leisure, I went to him for an explanation of his surprising disclosure. I had been trying to learn the language of the pipes in the meantime, but I acquired no more understanding than a dog has of English when he distinguishes between a kindly human tone and a cross one. I could tell when a tune was martial and when another was mournful. When a gay one rang out—if any had—I would not have mistaken it for a dirge. To some this may seem a very little learning, but I had begun by thinking all the tunes alike.

“Yesterday,” said my friend the officer, “we’d a little match between men who had some skill at embroidering the airs of the old ballads with trills of the grace-notes that they call ‘warblers,’ but this contest was broken up by a rugged son of the hills who, after asking for the pipes, flung from them a few strong, clear notes which gained the attention of all who are born to a knowledge of the music that speaks. I am not one of those, but I called my soldier-servant up and asked him what was being played. ‘Well, sir,’ said he, ‘that’s MacCallum—a great museecian he is. And hark, sir; he has the right of it, and boldly he is telling every one his thoughts. He says that every man kens that the grand general who’s dead was as cunning and skilfu’ in war as ony man above him, and ’tis late in the day—now that he’s laid away and dumb—to put blame on him as if he were an ignoramus and

a butcher, like some others. And now—oh ! brawly ye're tellin' it, McCallum—he says there may be scheming and plotting in high places, but no skull-duggery o' any sort, however it is gilded, will ever deceive ane single true chiel o' the Highlands as to the rights and the wrongs of the battle in which our chieftain fell.' ”

“ And then,” said my gossip, “ the pipes passed to the hand of another man, and my servant—seeing me about to move away—touched my arm and bade me wait, as this new player was another adept with the pipes. ‘ He's grand, at it,’ said he ; ‘ well done, Stewart !’ He's saying, sir, that the reason none will heed those who blame our grand leader that's gone is that there's men of rank among us—and of proud blood—that'll stand up to any man at home and swear that when our fallen chief came back with his orders for the battle he complained of them sorely, but he said, ‘ no better could he get,’ and when he lay down in his blanket his head was full of the trouble that was coming on him—he not being able to learn what he needed to know against the morrow.’ ”

There was more of this recital of what the pipes had spoken to the regiment, but it would only be irritating a sore to repeat it. The pipers spoke even more plainly as the bold outpourings of one incited bolder from another, until there were suggestions, by pipes grown mutinous, of sentiments which, happily, have seldom

been spread within the British Army. But what I have told suffices to illustrate my sole point, which is that the gift of eloquent speech in chords and trills is born with the master-pipers.

I never saw my officer-friend again for more than a nod or a word in passing. But on one day the pipes next door rang jubilantly, and man after man applied himself to them with ginger in his touch. Each blew triumphant, thrilling, heart-stirring chords, and every piper swaggered at his work with such a will as to send his aproned kilt to and fro with what seemed a double swing to each beat of the time.

I said to myself, "They have learned that Hector Macdonald is coming to be their new brigadier, and the pipes are assuring them that every Highlander may be himself again, certain of victory and new glory under a leader second only to the one they have lost." I still believe my conjecture was right.

And I know from living next door, as it were, that the cloud of gloom that had hung over the brigade was dispelled almost with the suddenness of its horrid appearance.

After that the "kilties" began to make in this war a continuation of their glorious record in the past.

## CHAPTER VI

### OFFICERS AND ARISTOCRATS

THEY are good fellows, the British officers, though a great many appear to try to make you think they are not when first they land in Africa. There is a type—a class of them—that stalk ashore with single eye-glasses and a haw-hawty manner, who are, I confess, as disagreeable to those who do not know them as any men on earth except their cousins in the Prussian army. But with the British it is all a very thin veneer or wash, and it begins to rub off more and more quickly the nearer they get to the front.

At Capetown, if you address such a man he will say, with great fatigue in his voice: “Aw, who *are* you?”—a question, and a way of putting it, that makes you fancy you may not be anybody after all. At Capetown, you see, the officer is by himself, feeling his own importance, and full of lofty ideas of what he is going to do. You meet him next at Orange River, five hundred miles nearer the front. He is in khaki serge now. He looks like everyone else, and he feels it. He has become a little cog in a big wheel, and he feels that. Again he

sees you. "Oh, hello!" he says; "you here? Going to the front? D--n it, I wish I was." Finally you see him at the front. He has become two legs of a thing that goes on 400,000 feet. He has been starved, parched, frozen, baked, shot at with bullets coming in ropes. He is dirty, soiled, and grown automatic. But he messes with twenty hearty, devil-may-care, good fellows with not a trace of airs in any one of them. "Hello," he says this time; "glad to see you. I say, we've got some whiskey—at least my chum Bagley has some. Come and have a tot, old chap." Seasoned and cured, already; all the electroplating rubbed off—just the plain honest brick left.

My son Lester has told me of a little incident which I missed seeing, and which illustrates the fact that not all these men lose their single eyeglasses or their other eccentricities even after they have become thoroughly good fellows. It was at the battle of Dreefontein. Several officers were under a shower of bullets that came like water shot out of a needle bath. All were pressing their bodies down as if they would have liked to push themselves into, instead of on, the earth. Suddenly, one very tall fellow began to rise up. He got on his knees first, and then he straightened up on his feet to his full stature and stood in that spray of lead—the only target on the field. He fumbled for his eyeglass, found it, contorted his cheek as a man does to fit such an ornament into his face, and then

drawled out : " Aw, I say, I wondah where these bullets are coming from ? " He continued to stand and stare at the kopje where the Boers lay, and presently he drawled again, while the air was tattered with shot and buzzing with their noise , " aw, I say, can any of you fellahs see where they come from ? " The other " fellahs " squirmed and wriggled as if they were going to get up and help him look, but not one raised his head or his body an inch. " Get down, Reggie, you silly fool ! " said one. " You're doing what the Boers want—and that isn't playing the game. " At that, Reggie adjusted his glass anew and, after having one more long and hard stare in the direction of the invisible enemy, slowly returned to embrace his mother earth.

War is almost as thorough a leveller as death. We had so many princes, dukes, and lords out in South Africa that it seemed as if the dear American girls who came to London would find the display of nobility very thin, and London very commonplace. The coroneted crowd was all in khaki, and they fared with the rest on absolutely equal terms. The wealthiest duke in England was to be seen running about the camp in the rain trying to borrow a waterproof sheet, and when he reached Bloemfontein he presided over the little book in which all visitors to Lord Roberts were asked to sign their names. Once at dinner a friend brought another friend and mumbled his name so that none of us

caught it. We all went over to one of our bedrooms afterwards and had whiskey and soda. Half-way into the night I discovered that our guest was a prince, but one member of the group did not find it out until he had gone. In the regimental messes the lords were called "Eddie" and "Arthur," or whatever their given names may be, by their brothers in arms; and "Agin-court" or "Wycombe," or whatever their titles are, by those who do not know them quite so well. Nothing sounded stranger than to hear a soldier-servant or an outsider saying, "Thank you, me lord," and "Yes, your lordship." I should think noblemen must have tired of it to the point of loathing. In speaking about titles, one of them dropped this remark the other day: "A chap gets a baronetcy, and for a week he is very pleased to hear everybody calling him "Sir Geoffrey"; but in the second week he gets d—d tired of it, and in the same length of time he discovers that the most substantial result of his preferment is that he has to pay twice as much for everything he buys as he paid before. The doctors who have come out here, and are all going to get knighthoods and baronetcies, are the only ones to be envied. They will jump their price for a visit up from two or five guineas to twenty-five guineas, because, you know, you can't offer a man with a title less than twenty-five guineas for looking at your tongue—you really can't, you know."

But if the men called each other "Eddie" and



“ Arthur,” do not for a moment imagine that the noblewomen did the same. There came out to us some of these distinguished charmers, and such a mouthing of titles as they gave us I never heard in my life before. “ I asked Lord Welby to take me to see Lord Roberts, but he was ordered off, and so I asked Lord Finchley Bagham, who was taking Lady Frederick, and I went with them.” It struck me that the sex which is ever loyal to etiquette, decorum, religion, and all the sentimental adjuncts of life, is equally resolved that aristocracy shall have its due from her.

Assuredly the British officer is a rattling good fellow, be he lord or commoner, duke or “ ranker.” When I first came out here, and was making a difficult and much obstructed way to the scene of war, I had some adventures so insulting to common manhood, and so nauseating to self-respect, that I thought I should have to turn tail and go home. But it was only from bureaucratic snobs that this befell me. With the army in the field I have not yet found any but good fellows—sterling, manly chaps, whose reckless bravery is the thing I most criticise about them. And, Lord love us! what a hard time they’ve been having! When I passed through the camps of the Grenadier, Scots, and Coldstream Guards the other day, I thought I never saw men more wretchedly and pitifully circumstanced. The officers are the “ drawing-room pets ” of London society, which in a large measure they rule; for if they

attend Lady So-and-so's ball, and are absent from the rich Mrs. Tiptoe's reception, the Lord pity Mrs. Tiptoe and her chances of "getting on." Well, there they were on the veldt, looking like a lot of half-drowned rats—and there they had been ever since the cold season and the rains had set in. You would not like to see a vagabond dog fare as they were doing. They had no tents. They could get no dry wood to make fires with. They were soaked to the bone night and day, and they stood about in mud toe-deep. Titled and untitled alike, all were in the same scrape, and all were stoutly insisting that it didn't matter ; it was all in the game.

## CHAPTER VII

### RESCUE OF THE QUEEN OF DIAMONDS

I KNOW now just what occurred when the Beautiful Youth kissed the sleeping Princess and woke her and all the people in the Palace who had gone to sleep, years and years before, in the middle of a Virginia reel.

Said the Princess, "Beautiful Youth, please fetch me my pony."

Said he, "Dear Princess, the cooks are preparing him to make soup for the servants—there being no other meat in the place."

Said the Queen-Mother, "Maid, I must have a new pair of stockings."

Said the Maid, "We ain't had any stockings here since we went to sleep last century. The ants has ate 'em all up, mum."

I came to know these interesting details, which are not in the fairy histories, when I was in the palace of the Empress Kimberley, the Queen of Diamonds who was kissed by the Beautiful Youth, General French, and woke up after a four months' sleep. It was when

I came there just as the siege was raised, and when I led the vanguard of those who rushed thither.

"A whiskey and soda," says I to a myrmidon at the club.

"Ain't had no whiskey for eight weeks," says he.

"Milk for my coffee," says I.

"The regulars has the only milk there is," says he, "likewise lots of jam—and they won't give it up."

I finish my meal and buy a cigar.

"Give me a match," I says.

"There's the candle," the merchant of tobacco remarks. "The matches run out in November."

A city relieved after a siege is a queer place. There never were so few horses in the streets of any modern town as were to be seen there. The people had eaten them; also the donkeys, which they declared to be far preferable to horses and mules, which are stringy and dry and tough.

The dogs consisted of bones and a tongue hanging out, and looked like the frames of dogs in process of construction.

The daily newspapers in the club reading-room were dated September 22, 21, 20, 19. The magazines were those of July and August of the previous year.

The shops were open, but the clerks had grown to be as automatic as the cuckoos in a German clock. Instead of saying "Cuckoo! cuckoo!!" they kept on remarking "All out, ma'am," "All out, sir," in refer-

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ence to whatever was asked for by the occasional customer.

No water ran in the wash-basins or bath-tubs, no electricity sparkled in the street lamps, nothing appeared to be natural and in working order, except the negroes in the streets, and I was told that a troop of them was down with the scurvy.

The Kimberley people did not like me to report that the town did not seem to be much damaged by the Boer shells, but that is what I thought.

Here and there you saw a hole through a wall, or the end of a building knocked out, but I don't believe that more than twenty buildings were seriously damaged, though thousands of shells fell in the streets.

During three months and three weeks the people went about as usual, growing more and more accustomed to the smaller shrapnel shells, but during the last week, when the Boers began to shoot 100-pound shells at them, the case was different. From Sunday until Friday of the last week of the siege the women and children sought shelter in the diamond mines.

What a mockery that seems! to have endless superabundant wealth under their feet and at their fingers' ends, and not be able to buy an hour of peace or safety. It was as if Fortunatus found himself and his purse at sea in an open row-boat, and offered a million to the winds if they would sell him a biscuit.

It is said that the women came to be frightfully ner-

vous and unstrung after the big shells began to come, at the end of the strain of a third of a year of the siege. Any little noise set them trembling, and a sudden jar terrified them. Who can wonder at it?

The town could have held out another month. Weeks before relief came rations became scarce, and it was Mr. Rhodes again, who at every juncture had led in the works of defence and salvation, who started the soup-kitchen, and served out as many as 15,000 pints of soup to as many citizens in a single day.

Of troops the people had their old and dashing, but very small, corps of Diamond Field Horse to start with, and Colonel Kekewich's 400 Loyal North Lancashire men, and some ridiculous little guns to strengthen them. There was also the Diamond Fields Battery, with guns like those of the regulars. Mr. Rhodes and the leading citizens then raised a mounted troop of 800 men, and a town guard of 2,700 men.

An American of great ingenuity made a grand big gun at the De Beers works, where the mechanics also turned out shells, which, it is said, is an easy thing to do.

What chafed and irritated the resourceful leaders of the place was the knowledge that they had begged the Imperial authorities to provide them with 2,000 regulars, and these had been refused. Had they been so strengthened, it is truly said that there would have been no battle of Maaghersfontein, because the garrison

could have prevented the Boers from making a stand either there or in the suburbs of the Diamond City.

But they had other and many grievances against the military, whom they regarded as hide-bound by rules, beset with a professional pride, which brooked no outside assistance and advice, and confirmed in methods which did not fit the South African situation.

The chief spirit of Kimberley ventured to suggest that a certain general should avoid and turn the Maaghersfontein position, and advance past it to Kimberley on the open level veldt, as French did afterwards, but the only satisfaction that came of this was a notification that the general did not wish further correspondence on military matters. Later several of the leading citizens wrote this same suggestion to Lord Roberts, and received a courteous and gratifying answer.

Many persons in England appear to credit Cecil Rhodes with monopolising a grievance against the tiny military force which formed a very minor arm of the defence of the place. This is not fair to Mr. Rhodes. He is very autocratic, though I do not think him jealous in the slightest degree. What he complained of was also the subject of complaint of every citizen of Kimberley to whom I spoke, and I met all the leading ones who outlived the siege. It is a duty to make this clear, since in the plain course of my work I disclosed the trouble in a report sent from Kimberley. In proof of



what I urge as to the general situation I refer the reader to a book on the siege written by E. Oliver Ashe, M.D., the leading doctor at Kimberley.

However, all friction had ceased with the raising of the siege, and all grievances were relegated to history. The handful of regulars, who would have been wholly ineffective without the Volunteers of nine times their strength, all fought side by side with them, and kept the enemy away until relief came. Colonel Kekewich has been duly honoured with promotion for his part in the plucky defence, and thereafter the people waited to hear and see what recognition, honour, and preferment were to come to the equally brave and resourceful leaders of those forces which were not trained or sworn to the pursuit of arms, yet took to them upon the noblest, and most unselfish impulse of public spirit.

And they waited also to see and hear what recognition was to be the reward of the humane and generous gentleman who fed the citizens and built them a great gun, who kept high hearts in the bodies of the mass, who controlled the blacks, and never wearied in watchfulness and well-doing while the awful strain endured.

Surely those who fought with brain and heart and purse, and those who left their peaceful paths to risk their lives for the women and children around them, are as worthy of compliment and distinction as any whom duty and discipline forced into this service !

## CHAPTER VIII

### HEROINES OF KIMBERLEY

So many of the refugees at Capetown were of the "most-favoured nation," that they were commonly known as "refujews." Here is a good story of a Kimberley refujew who had just returned to his home and neighbours in the Diamond capital.

"Vell," he said, "you had a tough time here, in Kimberley, I dink, ain't it?"

"Yes, we had an awful time," said his friend, "especially after the hundred-pound shells began flying around."

"Vell," said the refujew, "ve had a derrible time in Capetown also. Ve didn't haf no bomb-shells, but de cooking at de hotels vos fearful."

And that brings me once again to the subject of the siege of this place and to the fact that I was asked from London if I would tell what the women did during that fearful ordeal.

"The women are not getting their share of news of particular interest to themselves," said my correspondent.

Ah! I don't know about that. They are the sisters and mothers of the soldier boys, and some of the news must have come to the homes of England with more interest than anything I can write and a more awful shock than the average bursting shell effected here in Kimberley.

The leading surgeon of Kimberley, of whom I have already spoken, Dr. E. Oliver Ashe from London, allowed me to read his diary of the siege, and from it I made a few notes of what the women did.

The doctor was being urged to publish his diary in book form, as he has since done, and I prophesied that it would prove both fascinating and valuable in a superlative degree. I shall not hurt if I dip a teaspoon once into his great bucketful of curious notes and comments.

In the first place, the women stayed at home while a very great number of the men were in the various Volunteer forces, manning the forts, living in camps, skirmishing with the enemy—busy at soldiering. They were not bombarded as much as the women in the town were, but even if they had been it would not have been so bad for them, because it takes half the “cussedness” out of danger to be fighting the fellows who are trying to kill you.

When the time comes for making the terms of settlement with these inhuman Boers, every woman in England must remember why her sisters in Kimberley were

in more danger from shells than their husbands. It was because the Boers purposely shelled the houses, knowing that only women and children were in them. The Boer commandant was quoted in a Free State paper as saying that he was "putting his shells right in the middle of the town" on purpose. It was with similar Satanic premeditation that the Boers did the same thing at Mafeking.

That was done in defiance of the Geneva Convention, but the Boers regarded that agreement as the Tammany Hall political thief looked upon the Constitution of his State. When he was arranging a job to enrich his friends, and some one suggested that he was violating the Constitution, he said, "Arrah, phwat is a little thing like the Constitution to come between friends?"

The houses of the town were not especially constructed to resist 100-pound shells. What sort they were may be inferred from this dialogue, which took place in one just after the siege was raised. Two women were talking, and one proposed something which the other considered preposterous.

"I say!" she exclaimed, "do you think I am a sardine because I live in a tin house?"

The houses even of the more solid sort offered such slender defence against shells, that hundreds of households prepared what were called "splinter proofs" in their yards and gardens. These were little chambers or caves hollowed out of the earth. Some were as good

as brains could devise and money could obtain. They were very deep, and were roofed over with gigantic beams, steel plates, earth, and then another layer of steel and earth or sandbags over all. The one in the grounds of the dwelling of Mr. Gardner F. Williams, general manager of the De Beers Company, was well floored, contained rugs and wall-hangings, was electrically lighted, and ventilated by electric fans. As the ladies of Mr. Williams's family were away, the servants benefited by this haven of safety. I have no doubt the shelter proof at the Sanatorium, where Mr. Rhodes lived was equally well built and appointed, but I do not know that he ever made use of it.

"There was no question of his courage," says Dr. Ashe, who goes on to state that every day the nation-maker rode far out on the veldt toward the Boer lines, always wearing white flannel trousers, which made him as conspicuous as an electric light on a dark night. By the way, there were barriers at the ends of most of the streets, and there was an order that no one might ride past one of these without being searched. Mr. Rhodes was stopped one day by a guard, who was determined to search him. Mr. Rhodes fumed and raved, but the guard was obdurate. Then Mr. Rhodes produced written leave to pass without being searched. He had only been trying the guard.

But to return to the shelter-proofs.

"Ghastly little dog-holes, most of them were," says

Dr. Ashe, in his absorbing diary. They were often without ventilation, and were more dangerous than even Boer shells. Yet to these ran many women (and men, too, you may be sure) when the shells were flying. In these lived many invalids, and children, and nursing mothers, and in one a woman stayed from a Wednesday morning until a Friday evening.

Different women behaved differently. "As a rule, we think they showed more pluck than the men," a leading citizen said to me.

Two women were sitting on different stoeps on different days. In each case a shell fell near by and exploded in the street. One—an Englishwoman—looked on rather amused than otherwise, and went out and gathered the pieces to give away as mementoes. The other—a Dutch woman—died of fright.

Two Kaffir women were walking in the main street side by side. A shell came killed one and did not touch her companion.

Dr. Ashe tells of a lady who walked or rode out with her husband every day, shells or no shells. Many suffered dreadful deaths. Many had amazingly narrow escapes, mainly while at their daily work in their homes. One young lady hid in a shell-proof pit until it was time to dress for dinner, and then went to her room and was killed. That is precisely how death came to George Labram, the mechanical wizard who made a big gun for the town. Another shell fell under

a bed on which a baby was sleeping, but it did not explode. Another fell under a bed on which lay a Hindoo mother with her newly-born child. This shell did explode, and set fire to the bed, but mother and child escaped injury.

Again, a shell came to the breakfast-table of the family of a Volunteer who was on duty on the town's border. It burst and killed a six-year-old child, broke the arm and leg of a younger girl, and badly wounded the mother.

What Dr. Ashe calls the most wonderful of the many narrow escapes was one which I will narrate in detail, because it carries a profound moral with it. It proves how far men go out of their way to show themselves absurd when they venture to criticise the eccentricities of feminine fashion in dress. A lady was lying down, fully dressed, on her bed, resting before dinner. A maid came in to say that she had found a man with firewood (which was very scarce), who wanted a certain sum for a load. The lady turned over on her side, to get at the pocket in the back of her dress, and just as she rolled away from the side of the bed a 100-pound shell came and bored its way through the bed in exactly the place where she had been lying. It went through the bed and the floor and into the foundations of the house without exploding; but it would have cut her to pieces had she been dressed as men are clad and been able to put her hand down at her side and take her purse out of a pocket there



Plenty of women, who stood the smaller shelling very well, found their nerves at the breaking-point when the Boers brought the 100-pounder to play on their homes. That was when, as if by common consent, the servant-girls used to dive under the beds whenever the alarm was sounded to announce the coming of "a big one."

When first the town was put on rations, the tenderly-reared women had a sorry time. The business was so badly bungled that Indians, negroes, servants, and hoodlums all struggled together in the line, and the ladies were shouldered out of it. Their husbands were away, their servants were not well served, and they had to go themselves or be without meat and soup. Very many tried to content themselves with that great staple of the siege, bread made of wheat and corn-flour, and fried in lubricating oil—a pure sweet oil made from lard. After a time the system of ration-distribution was rearranged; the ladies found their sex and quality respected; and then, as Dr. Ashe says, it became "a wonderful sight to see all the great swells of the town"—doctors, architects, barristers, professors, wealthy merchants, De Beers directors, and the rest—patiently taking their places in line to get their daily meat.

There came a few days, towards the end of the siege, when Mr. Rhodes invited all the women and children to seek perfect safety in the diamond mines. Imagination runs riot at the mere idea of these treasure caverns

becoming the familiar haunt and rendezvous of a populace. Their thoughts on finding themselves walled about with rocks whose contents could purchase principalities and stir the longing of queens—these and the emotions of a thousand fair women of modest mould, who are of common clay, and yet love diamonds full as fondly, are too complex, too intense, too tremendous for handling here. But, apart from these suggestions, the actual scenes in those subterranean chambers, are said by Dr. Ashe to have been too strange ever to be forgotten by him.

To one of these gem-encrusted caverns, hollowed deep in the earth's interior, came 1,500 women and children; to another came 1,000. Small as were these companies, it seemed impossible to move without treading on a sleeping child. Rugs, sheets, blankets, and mattresses had been brought to the mouths of these treasure wombs and lowered into the depths, and those who lived in these strange refuges were fed as were no people on the earth's surface overhead, for the great diamond monopolists produced milk and tinned soups and many delicacies for their guests. A few wretched men, shaming the honour of their mothers and the sex of their fathers, crept into the mines to share the safety of the babes and women, but such was the silent contempt they inspired that they presently fled to the upper air, and none of their kind took their detestable places.

Many women worked in all the ways that charity, humanity, and benevolence suggested, and those who formed an organised corps distributed the few delicacies obtainable, especially the tinned milk, which was most precious, taking care that it went only to the nursing mothers, the babies, and the wounded.

One thinks of all the fair and gentle sisterhood as lamenting the carnage and cruelty of war. One is apt to forget in war that, after all, a woman contributed to the make-up of every warrior.

I had forgotten this when I said to a gentle Sister in the Kimberley Hospital one day, "Does it not amaze you that men should butcher and mangle each other as these poor chaps in this hospital have been mangled?"

She hesitated, bit her lip, and then, between set teeth, she said: "Only make it possible for me to put on men's clothes and carry a rifle, and I would shoot the cruel and cowardly Boers as long as I had life and strength to pull a trigger."

## CHAPTER IX

### HEROES OF THE SIEGE

THE fact that it was her citizens who defended and saved Kimberley put the story of the siege of that town in strong contrast with all the other records of this war.

The Imperial troops did their professional duty—and in some cases performed it gloriously—but theirs was a small part of the defensive force, and their share of credit, even when distributed with lavish generosity, must be proportionately little.

The bravest, most active, and broad-minded men of her Majesty's own forces, like Colonel Kekewich, Lieutenant McInnes, Captain O'Brien of the Lancshires, Major Fraser and others, while regretting that the Imperial force was not many times larger, were bound to recognise the force and justice of the allotment of credit which circumstances compelled. For my part, taking no side but accepting the situation as it was, I set about to discover who were the leaders among the citizens, and to make them known to all the world. This, fortunately, could be

done without any fear that the leaders of the little Imperial force would miss recognition and reward, since the army and the Government had their own well-established means for that end.

The head and heart of the citizen activity was Cecil J. Rhodes. It is hopeless to attempt to set down what he did. As Captain Tyson said in a speech after the town was relieved: "To him we owe everything." With the exception of the commanders of the Volunteer forces and the physicians, nearly all the other citizens whose claim upon the gratitude of Great Britain is here recorded, were Mr. Rhodes's lieutenants. Nothing was too big for Mr. Rhodes—he overlooked nothing, he failed in nothing. His tremendous force, his habit of command, and his huge operations have left him impatient of delay and contemptuous of impediment. Such a leader, suddenly curbed by military formula, etiquette, and the limitations of a minor force, would be apt to contribute his share of the friction which must be generated. It was generated. It quickly expended itself. It is a thing which was but is not, and which has left behind it no shadow.

Next in the value of his assistance was George Labram, chief engineer of the De Beers Company. He was killed in warfare during the siege, and his widow and very promising little son will be generously cared for by the De Beers Company; but it is said that had he lived the Government could hardly have done him

any honour commensurate with his deserts. He was the inventive genius of the place and time. To him nothing seemed impossible. He it was who made the famous Kimberley big gun, and to make it he had to devise and make the tools to do the work with. Before that he manufactured shells for the cannon of the regulars. He built a cold storage apparatus for preserving the meat used in the town, and for this end was obliged to construct the ice machines—doing it all in nine days. He was an American. So marked was his ability and so colossal were his services, that the regulars buried him—civilian as he was—with full military honours.

R. H. Henderson, the Mayor, whose term of office expired just after the town was relieved, organised the relief committees—a great work, as will be seen when it is known that beside the 45,000 townsfolk the place contained between 2,000 and 3,000 regulars. In many other paths he worked with keen enthusiasm in harmony with Mr. Rhodes.

Mr. Gardner F. Williams, general manager of the De Beers mines, and Mr. Rhodes's colleague on the board of direction, was a power, and the custodian of very great responsibility. He collaborated with Mr. Rhodes throughout the siege, was always in sympathy with his chief, and knew, to a hair, the capabilities of the men and machinery in his charge. He assisted at all times and in everything, and never failed to supply whatever was needed. He supplied the material, tools,

and will, where Mr. Labram provided the inventive genius. Like Labram, Mr. Williams is an American, and he also had the genius to make or to plan whatever could not be otherwise obtained.

Dr. Smart, late Colonial Secretary, happened to be visiting Mr. Rhodes when the siege began. He at once interested himself in Mr. Rhodes's manifold activities in behalf of the troops and the people. The mere contagion of his energy worked many others up to a high pressure, and from first to last he inspired and encouraged all who assisted or even observed him. He and Captain T. G. Tyson ran the soup-kitchen, distributed the fruit and vegetables, and he, especially, was constant in his assistance to Mr. Rhodes.

Captain Tyson is a dynamo of energy. He has long been conspicuous in every public work and institution in the town, and as the manager of the very ambitious Kimberley Club is one of the best-known and best-liked of the citizens. It is said that everybody in South Africa knows him, and nearly every one calls him by his first name. The mere management of the club—as he carried it on—was a god-send to the scores who lived or got their meals there. He inaugurated the famous work of distributing soup—a task that sometimes compelled the giving out of pint rations to sixteen thousand persons.

The chef of the club was “commandeered” or “in-spanned”—as the local phrases go—to superintend the



concoction of the fluid, which insured its being of a very high quality. Captain Tyson, himself a soldier of twenty-three years' service, and the first colonial Volunteer to be presented at Court at home, also served as caterer to the local battalion called "the Buffs," but in addition to these routine duties he took upon himself the continual task of assisting Mr. Rhodes.

Colonel D. Harris, M.L.A., V.D., is the man who returned to Kimberley just before the beginning of the siege and gave the necessary impetus for the formation of the Town Guard, the largest armed force of the defence. After the force was organised he commanded it, and in such a manner as to win the thanks of the High Commissioner.

Lieutenant-Colonel Peakman, who for dash and pluck stands high in the order of merit, is a man of wide and lively experience in past colonial wars. He succeeded Colonel Scott Turner in command of the Kimberley Light Horse, which was raised, equipped, and mounted by Mr. Rhodes. Lieutenant-Colonel Finlayson, who commanded the Kimberley Brigade (Diamond Fields Artillery and Kimberley Regiment), performed his duties with single-minded devotion.

Mr. W. D. Fynn's name can never be left out of the list of those to whom the town is most deeply indebted. Whoever had frequent contact with Mr. Rhodes found that "Send for Fynn" was the phrase most frequently used by the chief. No matter what

was wanted, he sent for Fynn. Mr. Fynn, in peace times, was manager of the De Beers farms. He gathered and selected the horses for the mounted troop, he rid the town of its burden of the eight thousand black men who were in the mine compounds when the siege began. This was as difficult as it was important, because the Boers determined that these workmen should remain and eat up the siege supplies. They kept sending the blacks back, but Mr. Fynn persisted until he got them all to their homes. He organised and managed a corps of runners in order to communicate with the main army, and he also recruited and managed a corps of scouts. He saved all the cattle of the town, often at the risk of his life, when the Boers were raiding the suburbs, and afterwards he sent out a train of waggons full of provisions to the front at the suggestion of the incessantly good presiding genius of the place.

No men "played the game" better than the doctors, though the very nature of the work caused them to be overlooked where military valour shone so brilliantly. Dr. Ashe knew no difference between night and day or safety and danger. He was formerly associated with Mr. Treves in London, and naturally leads the profession here. Drs. Mackenzie, Watkins, Stoney, Mathias, and Hebedon, Surgeon-Major Smith and Dr. Ortlepp, all did more than their duty. At the hospital Drs. Russell and Shields, in organising, attending, and operating, nearly worked themselves ill.

These are the men who protected and saved Kimberley. They wore no braid, and were ignorant of red tape, but they possess the deep gratitude of all their fellow-citizens.

## CHAPTER X

### BOER BRAVERY AND HONOUR

IN Kimberley, just after General French had set it free of Boer environment, the air of every British community and household throbbed with the jubilation of the moment.

After five months or more of almost continual check, defeat, and slaughter, victories had piled themselves upon the British. Kimberley and Ladysmith were free, and the cruel Cronje, the chief guerilla opposed to them, was in their net.

They fell to saying that the war would soon be over. The hope was parent to the assertion, but it was only hope, for they knew little of the Boer. Those who had lived longest with him in peace had deceived them the most about what sort of man he would prove in war. All that had been learned at that time was that he was neither brave nor honourable. He is obstinate, crafty, semi-savage, clever in gaining and keeping ambush, but up to that time he had never shown himself brave.

As to his honour, I will illustrate his idea of it further along by telling a few of his practices.

A leading member of the Cape Government had

assiduously spread the idea that the Colony would rise against the British. He used to predict it every morning as a possibility of each day. Finally he spoke of it as a last trump card up the sleeve of the Boer.

He hypnotised some of the Imperial leaders, civil and military—which is why correspondents were forbidden to describe what a nest of viperous rebels and traitors the Colony was. It is also the reason why even the best generals were led to refer publicly to the foe as brave and honourable. All the officials from the first to the last had been treating the Boers to confectionery and bouquets in a manner most startling to an onlooker, who had supposed that British methods were always blunt and straightforward, direct from the shoulder, just and sincere.

This was not a welcome departure, I assure you, to the mass of Britons, who asked one another, "Must we always be bewitched when we deal with South African problems? Must we for ever make mistakes? Could there be a more certain mode of earning the contempt and continuing the disloyalty of the Dutch-blooded people of the Cape than to treat them with a leniency and magnanimity which they translate to be the outcome of fear? The Dutchman in the Republics must be soundly thrashed. He will understand that and respect us. The Dutch traitor in the Colony must be hanged or shot. That will put the fear of God in his neighbours."

So said all the British in or out of the army—all, alas ! except the governing body.

I was so disturbed by the difference between what I saw the Boer to be and what the British commanders wished to believe of him that I went beyond my sphere as a war correspondent and endeavoured to bring the people at home back to a view of the case from its roots.

“ First,” I said, “ I beg you to remember that this is not a war waged by England. It is a war steadily and stealthily planned by the Queen’s Dutch subjects and the Dutch Republics for fully twenty years. For between four and six years they equipped for it. They began purchasing arms and planning defences before the Jameson Raid ; let no one fool you with falsehood about that. Finally, Kruger begged Steyn to declare war three weeks before Steyn consented, then war was declared by the Dutch, and hostilities were begun by them.

“ Next rid your mind of the notion that it is a war against two farmer Republics.

“ There is not a farmer in the two countries, and only one (the Free State) was a republic in any true sense. These people are herders of cattle, sheep, and goats, like the Israelites of old, and the Afridis and Turks and Balkan peoples of to-day.”

One day I read, in an article by Mr. H. W. Massingham, that “ the Boers have made South Africa.” The

gentle, scholarly journalist took that means of saying that he had never been here. The Boer has sat on South Africa and smothered it, kept it down, made it the most backward of all white men's lands of equal white man's tenancy. His so-called "farms" are as Nature made them—merely reaches of veldt on which his cattle graze. On each one he has put up a home, but its surroundings are almost invariably more repellent and disorderly than any homes I ever saw, except the cabins of the freed slaves in the United States. Their camps and strongholds from which the British have routed them are the filthiest places I have known men of any sort to live in, and I have seen Red Indian camps, Chinese camps, Turkish camps, and the camps of many sorts of black men. It does not excuse the Boer to state the simple truth that he lived by hunting until twenty-five years ago, and that since then he has lived by cattle herding. He has taken a quarter of a century to grow a small patch of mealies for his partial support, and for variety in food.

As soon as the Boers deserted the trenches and kopje at Maaghersfontein all the British officers who could do so hastened to the spot to see what manner of fortifications had so successfully withstood their attack.

What they found was, I suppose, the filthiest place in the world. If any place ever was dirtier it was the Boer stronghold at Paardeberg Drift, where Lord Roberts vanquished Cronje—but that pest-hole had not



been created at the time that we went over the veldt to have a look at Maaghersfontein.

The Boers had gone away in such a hurry that they had no time to take their belongings with them. Evidently the order was "every man for himself, and no time must be lost." Consequently the position was littered with trunks, saddles, tin boxes, bags of mealies, of mealie flour, and of rice. Cartridges were as thickly strewn as dead leaves in autumn. Blankets and clothing were also much in evidence.

In places the frightened Boers had made an effort to hide their leavings by piling them in the trenches and then throwing skins or canvas over them, and dirt and tree branches on top of all.

In their trunks were found, usually, only clothing and letters. Much that they had been using was of British make, largely taken from the British dead, for these "simple, pastoral people" stripped and robbed the dead after every battle.

Dozens and dozens of bullock hides were in use there, for shelters and for coverings. These had been taken fresh from the backs of the cattle, and the sun was making them sizzle and bubble, frying the fat and tissue on the underside of each, so that they exhaled a nauseating stench. But this formed the least part of the effluvium. What caused the greater part I must leave to the reader's imagination. A plague of flies helped to make the pest-spot still more unendurable.

From every shelter and pole and bush hung strips of biltong (jerked beef or venison), for they had not dared to stop even long enough to take away this main staff of their lives. The drinking water—perhaps even more precious since it is more scarce—hung upon the bushes as they left it in the drum-shaped wooden casks which they sling below their carts and waggons.

The place was a village of shelters, or, in reality, two villages—one upon the rocky kopje, and one by the trenches on the veldt.

On the kopje the habitations were walls of piled-up boulders covered with skins or canvas waggon covers. They made the hill resemble one of the ruined cities of the extinct cliff-dwellers in Arizona.

On the veldt the shelters were made of upright sticks, roofed over with skins, waggon covers, or bush branches. To use these branches they had cut their bushes ingeniously, taking away only a branch or two from each bush, and thus leaving enough for them to hide and move behind in battle without being seen.

Little heaps of bits of exploded lyddite shells in many shelters showed that the Boers had been collecting these as curios to take to their homes, though, as it proved, they were glad to be off with only their lives.

Their trunks were nearly all the cheapest of tin boxes. The saddles they abandoned were mainly loot from the British troops. All seemed to have had mackintoshes, probably the same that the Transvaal Government took

from the Uitlanders' stores in Johannesburg. No one has yet found any soap or towels among their leavings. They ate and drank from the same sort of enamelled iron plates which the men and officers of the British army use, but they had brought no knives or forks, though many had busied themselves in cutting knives and forks out of wood. A great many of these rude, home-made table implements were scattered about the camp.

We had supposed that Maaghersfontein kopje was a long, high hill sagging into a kloof or depression in the centre. It proved so different that we could scarcely believe our eyes when we came to it. In fact, it shrank lower and lower the nearer we approached it, and it proved to be a bunch or huddle of little kopjes and shoulders and knobs—a very nasty place, indeed, and all intersected with trenches amid its different parts. Near the eastern end, where the British attacked it with the Highland Brigade, there was but one trench, a rift four feet deep, cut out of the white limestone and banked up a foot and a half in front with the dirt that came off the top of the limestone.

This trench ran, with a few small breaks, all along the front of the group of kopjes, and then, at the eastern end, stopped and left a wide opening of level veldt. Far back to the north of the kopjes another trench began, and reached to the river, then turned and ran alongside the Modder for a great distance. This was

where the Guards fought all day valiantly, but without doing more than hold back the enemy. At the western end of the field, by the railway, where the enemy had expected us to advance, the trenches were two, three, and even four in a row. Moreover, they were dug in all directions among the many hillocks and hills, and formed what Major Streatfield rightly called a veritable "devil's trap."

We saw very few and faint signs of the lyddite on the low ground, but on the hills, where it struck the rocks, it had done terrific damage to nature. It split up rocks that weighed many tons, shivering huge boulders as if they had been sliced by a gang of saws. Wherever it hit the rocks it stained them pea-green.

The site of the wonderful disappearing gun, of which we had heard so much, proved that only an ordinary gun had been there, and that it had stood upon solid rock. It had been set up in an impromptu embrasure built of loose boulders. The crevices in the walls were filled with sand, bags of sand had been put upon the walls, and tree branches were so arranged as to hide the place from below.

And now as to their "bravery and honour," I had seen and heard sufficient to fill a page of any newspaper with accounts of their cowardly and dastardly behaviour before I came to Kimberley, but at that place I learned that they had been guilty of different and original enormities.

Here they killed the wounded and laid their bodies in a row after one of the forays out of the town. And here they armed many of the blacks to fight against the British, showing all the world how scandalously fraudulent were their exclamations of horror at the idea of employing native Indian troops in this war, a step not then even discussed. We heard from Natal and from Colesberg of their arming their black servants and employing them in the war, but this I have merely read of—not seen or got at first hand. In Kimberley, however, it was positively stated that the Longburgh negroes sent out of the Diamond Company's compounds were impressed into the Boer service, they being blacks whom the British had a recent necessity to punish for rebellion.

There had, at this time, hardly been a battle in which the Boers had not abused either the white flag, the Geneva Cross, or both.

I think it is safe to say that the fight at Paardeberg Drift, where Cronje surrendered, was the only battle up to that date in which they had not disgraced themselves in one or other of these ways. At the battle before that, Spion Kop in Natal, they loaded their Maxims in their ambulances in order to get them safely away. This they did at Modder River also.

At another time when they showed the flag of truce an officer said to his men, "The dogs are trying to murder us by showing a white flag. Lie still, all of you.

Put your helmets on the muzzle-ends of your guns and slowly lift them into sight above the rocks." This was done, and a volley of rifle bullets greeted what the Boers took to be the line of British heads. At Belmont a similar white flag ruse succeeded only too well.

During the siege of Kimberley the devilish trick was played upon the town defenders' outposts, and Kimberley is where the Boers shelled the funeral *cortège* of George Labram—who made the big gun for the town—at dark, later than they had ever shelled the town before. Spion Kop is where they shot a doctor while he was bandaging a wounded man. At many places they fired on the ambulances. I saw them do it at Modder River, and I saw them fire on the stretcher-bearers in that battle time and time again.

There is never an excess of poetry in war, but one phase of it that was sentimental, if not poetic, has always been the tendency of opposing pickets to establish a show of *camaraderie*. In the fight between the North and the South in America the pickets exchanged cigars and tobacco, and in that between America and Spain last year they conversed together, and exchanged gifts. In the war waged by the Boer against the Briton the Boer has crept up like a snake in the grass to kill the outposts on every field since the war began.

When the British entered Jacobsdal it looked like a city of doctors. Every man in the streets wore a Red Cross badge on his arm. These were the men who had

just been shooting at the British from behind the garden walls. There was nothing novel or original about their seeking the cowardly shelter of a doctor's badge. The British were quite accustomed to it. They once entered a Boer laager after a victory and found twenty-seven of these bogus doctors in it—and seven or eight wounded men for their patients. There was also a plethora of doctors in the tiny hospital on "the island" at Modder River. They had hidden their rifles and cartridges under the beds of the patients and put on their Red Cross badges as soon as they saw they could not get away.

Again and again mounted soldiers chased Boers in the veldt and saw them rush into a house, give their arms into safekeeping, and then come out with Red Cross bands upon their arms.

Many times they hid in farmhouses and sent the women out to make a pretence of occupation in household work, so that the British scouts would ride up without suspicion and receive a volley from the farmhouse windows.

Their wounded have shot the British soldiers after a battle had ended, and when they were offering them succour. This is after the pattern of the Dervish, who is never a good man till he is dead. At Graspan one of the wounded Boers accepted a drink of water from a gallant officer, and then killed him as he passed on to the next sufferer.



They were not content with looting the houses of loyal persons in the British colonies, but in Natal in scores of instances they smashed into kindlings and tore to ribbons whatever they did not want or could not carry off. Worse yet, they fouled the walls of the homes of defenceless women with obscene writings.

They never knew the value of an oath or promise, and have not learned it since the war began. I always say when the qualities of the Boers are in discussion, look at their portraits—at the photographs of such leaders as Kruger and De Wet. Then, if you are good at reading what God writes upon human faces, there is no need to add a word.

## CHAPTER XI

### CRONJE AS A PRISONER

UNAVOIDABLE conditions prevented my being in at the death of the military career of the stern guerilla chief, Cronje, on Majuba Day. However, I was in continual receipt of news from the front, only twenty-five miles away.

The decisive moment of the siege was when Lord Roberts's furthestmost force planted cannon on the kopje to the eastward of the Modder river bed and the contiguous trenches in which the ever-cautious Boers were hiding. These guns enfiladed the trenches and so slaughtered the enemy that they had to surrender.

When, a day or two before this triumphant move, the Modder River rose three feet, it floated many hundreds of dead horses and cattle away upon its swift current. The British, not realising that the Boer thrives best in a stench and amid surroundings of putridity, such as he always provides near his homes, were of the opinion that this cleansing of the rabbit-holes would prolong the siege. But the advantageous placing of the British guns in an enfilading position quickly next morning brought the Boers to terms.

Cronje is picturesquely described as a thwarted general, but to the wide-awake and well-informed British officers, who are not under the severe rod of misguided censorship, he presented the appearance of a typical squat-figured, black-bearded, neckless Boer. I am sorry to say that, because of the previous ill-success of the British or because of those politics which beset them but do not hinder the Boers in warfare, this bushwhacking chieftain has been treated as if he were another Napoleon. He and his wife were taken in a Cape cart, drawn by six artillery horses, to the Modder River a few days after his capture. His belongings were in a sack. His wife's wardrobe was in a pillowcase, and the chief article in Frau Cronje's pillowcase proved to be a silk dress commandeered from Lady Sarah Wilson.

When Cronje reached Modder River he was courteously asked whether he would have breakfast. He grunted, "No, I have had it."

Then he was informed that the train to carry him to Capetown was to start at three o'clock.

At this he grunted "Yes."

His manner was such that he was not pressed into further conversation. Nevertheless, he was provided with champagne at lunch, while the mounted troop of City Imperial Volunteers, who brought him to the Modder, were fain to satisfy themselves with recollections of a recent banquet or two which they had enjoyed before leaving London.

What surprised me beyond measure was the unavoidable comparison between this progress of the guerilla Cronje through the country, and the manner in which Lord Roberts was obliged to make his way through the same British colony to the seat of war. Lord Roberts was spirited out of Capetown. The train, with a pilot engine and thirty soldiers, went out of the station to fool the rebels in this English colony into the belief that the Field-Marshal was riding in it. Then the regular passenger train pulled out and picked up Lord Roberts in the suburbs. The British did not dare to send their commander-in-chief to the front as even a private citizen travels, but loaded with honours their enemy, who had plotted for twenty years to take England's possessions from her and to drive the English out of their own colonies into the sea. Let no Englishman forget this when the day of settlement comes.

Another correspondent of mine describes Frau Cronje as follows : " She is a thin, decrepit old woman, and in her rough straw hat and dirty old black dress, without cloak or shawl of any sort, presented a hopelessly miserable, draggled, and woebegone appearance." She appears to have reassorted her belongings at some time during the day, for when she was put on the train (an observant officer tells me) she carried Lady Sarah Wilson's dress on her arm, and the name of its fashionable maker, " Cooper, Bond Street," which was plainly

legible, became an advertisement which, I fear, was wasted upon the "Tommies" and the gaping country folk who read it.

I did not see the old guerilla chief's surrender, but I enjoy thinking of the account of it which I have had from a naval officer.

It was 7-30 a.m. when the squat-figured, hard-faced old man came up out of the river-bed mounted on a ragged white pony. He wore black trousers, a long dust-coat over his jacket, and on his head a soft light brown hat, with a very broad brim and an extra wide band of leather around it. His wife tagged along behind him. Both came to Lord Roberts' laager-like headquarters, where three chairs had been set out on the veldt between three sides of a large hollow square made up of the men of the Highland Brigade. Cronje sat on one chair, his secretary sat on his right, Lord Roberts sat on his left, and an interpreter stood near, for the old fellow pretended, as so many Boers do, not to be able to speak English. His little eyes, set close together in his broad round face, were touched with sadness, and a humility which did not match his square chin and round cranium. He and Lord Roberts talked for nearly fifteen minutes, during which time it is said that Cronje strenuously begged that he might not be separated from his wife and secretary. Lord Roberts asked him what number of men he surrendered, and the old guerilla said he had not any idea; his men had

been slipping away, through the British lines, in twos and threes for a week. Once, when his secretary said something which excited him, the old Boer leader turned quickly, and shot so angry and fierce a glance at the man that all who saw it said under their breaths, "Hello! that's the real Cronje—the Cronje of Bronkerspruit—the man we have an old account with."

Suddenly Lord Roberts jumped up, bowed, and walked away. He did not shake hands with his fallen foe. Breakfast was spread for Cronje, Frau Cronje, and the secretary upon a table under some trees near by. An impulsive officer sent a cigar to the old man. He smoked it and then sent his secretary to ask for more.

"Oh, no," said the kindly officer, "let him have a pipe and some Boer tobacco if he wants to smoke; that's good enough for him."

It was a sentiment applauded by all who heard or heard of it.

The only pro-Boer I have ever met in the British Army watched the 4,000 and odd prisoners marched off to Modder River, all glad to be prisoners, but grumbling because they were obliged to walk. He came to me afterwards. "I will never defend the Boers again," said he. "I am cured. I have seen them at last."

"Well?" I inquired.

"They are the worst-looking men I have ever seen."

They are wild-eyed, savage, dull-witted, misshapen. Those who show symptoms of a brain appear to be unbalanced. If you saw two coming down a road at home you would take your washing off the lines. The different parts of their bodies do not fit together. This one's legs do not match his trunk. The next one has a head like a button on the shoulders of an ox. A fourth has the long arms of an ourang-outang. No sensible person who has seen them could support a cause to which such men were joined."



## CHAPTER XII

### FREEING THE FREE STATE

ON March 11th, when the head of Roberts's army was about thirty miles away, I started from Kimberley to overtake it in a Cape cart drawn by six fresh horses, and rode 110 miles before I caught up with the troops. Probably in no better way than by that experience can the reader be brought to realise how rapidly the army—mainly made up of foot-soldiers—was swung into the Free State. It is said that in two days the Guards, so wrongly thought of as mere pets of London's aristocracy—made a march unequalled in the records of European infantry.

Paardeberg battlefield, where Cronje surrendered, was the worst-looking fighting-ground I had ever seen. It looked like a dumping-ground of dead animals, wrecked waggons, burned stores, and cast-off human accoutrements. It also looked as if a convulsion of nature had taken place there, so generally and widely was the earth's surface seamed with trenches. These trenches were cluttered with everything that the Boers brought with them and were obliged to leave behind,

except their rifles, which the conquerors took away from them. Trunks, clothing, medicines, horse trap-pings, letters, books, ammunition and food boxes, and a thousand other things, were strewn in and all around these pits. Behind the outside trenches were houses that had been blown to ruins, and acres of broken and burned carts and waggons. If there ever were days when civilised warfare was accompanied by confusion, rapine, flame, yells, groans, smoke-clouded fields, deafening noise, and all the rest that you see in the pictures of Waterloo and Alma, those days are gone. In this most modern of all wars order and system have prevailed, and men have fought and died under discipline. Paardeberg field was however an exception, for Bedlam appeared to have reigned there, and the old-fashioned ideas of the last day and of hell itself seemed to have been realised in that encounter. But the fact was that the damage to the Boer waggons and houses was wreaked bit by bit, slowly, during many days, and the litter of the trenches was made only when the fight was over, and when first the Boers and then the British Tommies ransacked the trunks and boxes to see what they wished to carry away.

For fifty or sixty miles beyond Paardeberg lay the bodies of dead and dying horses and oxen being eaten by vultures. There were hundreds and hundreds of them, abandoned by both Boer and British because they were ill, exhausted, or shot. Nothing seen in this

war was more pitiful than the fate of these unoffending creatures, but one could not honestly blame either side for not stopping to put them out of their misery either in battle or on a flying march. Vultures were as abundant as crows in any field at home, and yet they were not plentiful enough to do their scavenger work properly. They attacked less than half the dead animals, and even upon these they perched gluttoned, heavy, and half asleep.

My journey proved such a risky one that it was said in the army that if I was not shot I must certainly be carried off a prisoner to Pretoria—so infested with Boers was the country and so wholly unguarded was my route. I did not know this on starting, but was soon made to realise it. I stopped at some Boer houses and took coffee with the women, and many Boers rode out and intercepted me to obtain news and to ask whether any losses they pretended to have suffered at the British hands would be made good with English money. Being in khaki and in a helmet, I was mistaken for a British officer. One Boer said that he had picked up two plump English ponies on the veldt and he wanted to know what he should do with them. “Keep them,” said I, “if you don’t, some one of your neighbours will.” “Do you give me permission to keep them?” he asked. “Yes,” I replied, “I give you permission.” Thus I made my way half across the once happy Free State—now to be happier

than ever, but under another name and government. At one place I was warned that some kopjes were alive with Boers who were sniping any stranger who passed. A little further on a Boer rode up and directed me to go ahead by the road that hugged those very hills. Then he rode on to give notice of my coming. Of course I took another route straight across the open veldt, where no rock-warming, trench-haunting Boer who ever lived would come to molest me. And that was the end of that episode.

"Even the blooming butterflies are the colour of khaki," as Tommy Atkins remarked when he saw his first swarm of locusts.

There is an exception to the rule, as was proved by the first living thing I saw on that eventful journey. It was a secretary bird a yard in height, as heavy as a big turkey—a stately bird holding himself proudly and stalking along with noble strides as he glanced about him for a breakfast of snakes. He was black and white. Partridges and many snipe-like birds fluttered out of our road, and, presently, I saw ahead of me a swarm of vultures soaring in as thick a cloud as if they had been moths. As I drew nearer I noticed that the bulk of each one's body was very great. On the ground—where there were two score waddling about—they seemed even larger. They marked the outer edge of the great and horrid field of carnage.

Foul, unsightly, loathesome birds are these. They

were to be my constant companions for three days. I was to see hundreds upon hundreds of them, and never once, by day, fail to see them. Yet there were not enough of them to make away with all the food that war had given them. Toward the end of the ride the ghoulish birds thinned out, but the dead horses and oxen multiplied.

I am told that a British officer who would not take a pin for his own use will steal like an Albanian to feed a hungry horse—and all the horses have been hungry of late, and many a gentleman has looted forage. It must be, then, that the officers feel as I do about this slaughter of horses. Between battles a dozen deadly forms of disease seize them, and they have to be flung aside, and left to die in the dust. And in battle their legs are snapped off, their bodies torn, and their heads shattered—and there is nothing to do but to leave them to the aasvogels, as the vultures are called. There is no time, in battle, to put them out of their pain.

Let the anti-cruelty people of England and America rave as they may, there are other things to think of beside humanity in the heat of great battles.

Nothing in my experience compares with the sight of the hundreds upon hundreds of dead and dying horses on this 100 miles of war's promenade. The poor beasts had done no man any harm—in fact, each one had been a man's reliance—and to see them tattered

by shell and then ripped open by vultures, often before they were cold in death, was enough to distress the most impassive. They had not deserved and they could not understand their horrible ill-luck. For some reason hundreds had dragged themselves to the main road, and then had died either in the track of the waggons or by its side.

But the worst horror was on the last battlefield, only twenty-four hours after the fight at Driefontein. On this field not nearly all the horses were yet dead, and as I came up beside the prostrate body of a beautiful steed it would slowly and painfully lift its head and turn upon me a pair of the most pleading, woe-stricken eyes, full of a hunger to know what I could do for it. And all I could do was to drive on, for I had no fire-arms even for my own protection deep in an enemy's country, where no single armed man had been put to guard the route of our supplies and reinforcements.

My companion, Mr. Samuel J. Pryor, used to turn and look back at these dying horses only to find that they were still straining their sad eyes after the cart. Then he would say, "He is looking at us yet. Oh, it makes me ill! Look! he is staring at us like a guilty conscience. What can we do? I wish we did not see such things."

For my part, I would not look behind. Heaven knows, it was bad enough to see ahead, where horses stumbled and fell from weakness, while the horrible

aasvogels swept in circles over them, eager to rend their living flesh. Oxen, too, were lying everywhere, with straight, stiff legs silhouetted against the veldt. They looked like the toy animals that children make out of round potatoes with wooden matches for legs.

Everywhere also great army biscuit tins, gleaming like masses of crystal, littered the slovenly face of the earth. Cartridge shells, bully beef tins, tattered coats and trousers torn from wounded bodies, cartridge papers, shrapnel shells and shot, trenches, little forts with crowns of sand bags—these, also, grew familiar as household ornaments.

Where there had not been a battle there had been a camp, and where there were no signs of camping there were almost sure to be the furrows and the waste of war. When we found gin-bottles and three-legged, pot-bellied iron kettles, we knew we were where the Boers had camped. When we saw only shiny biscuit tins the size of little trunks we needed not to be told that we stood where there had rested an army that had fed upon only one biscuit a day, but had gone uncomplainingly on, well content with being led by the greatest wizard of war since Napoleon—the British soldier's idol, little Bobs.

As I passed across the river at Paardeberg battlefield, I came upon two mountains—of what, do you think? One of compressed hay and one of oats. And both were on fire, being burned by some men of the War-



wickshire Regiment, by order of the Field-Marshal, who had no waggon to bring away the precious food, and did not mean that the Boers should get it. Awaiting the torch was another great hillock made of a thousand boxes of biscuits, while seventy miles ahead horses and men were on half-rations or less. Such is war. Such is what must be endured by Tommy, by his generals—aye, by the Duke of Westminster, who has been glad to borrow a blanket, ere this, and six feet of the veldt for his bed.

All places on the veldt are alike, but they have different names. At one spot in the monotony called Poplar Grove—and eternally to be known as a battle-field, or more strictly as a place where the British jogged the Boer rear along with their bullets—we met a little band of Engineers with heavy waggon, loaded with telegraph wire and tools. They were setting up the field telegraph, and repairing what had been set up and then knocked down by buck waggon at night.

“You are the first civilians to make this journey,” said an officer. “The enemy is all about us, and we have not guarded the route; those hills ahead are full of Boers. They copped a cart and horses there yesterday, and they have been sniping us as our men have passed along the road.”

We outspanned and cooked breakfast, and the little caravan disappeared over a ridge beside the dangerous kopjes. On the instant that we thought ourselves alone

there sprang up, as if out of the earth, a Boer and his grown-up son—both on horseback, and both making straight for us. They came, and stood by our camp-fire and looked us over, and they went to our cart and examined its contents. They then advised us how to go on to the army by the shortest way, beside their hostile kopjes. And presently they rode off and lingered at a distance watching us. They were a dirty, well set-up lithe pair, who sat their fine horses like centaurs. We took a route they had not recommended, dodging their kopjes and soon overtaking and passing the Royal Engineers. Again we were alone upon the veldt.

After this we met many Boers, who always made straight for us. Each time we gave ourselves up for lost, and made up our minds to go to Pretoria without resistance. But all these Boers were fence-straddling wretches who pretended to be glad we had come, and were sure to tell us that the Boer army had treated them very kindly, but the British had stolen their hens and turkeys—and to whom should they make out their bills? As a matter of fact, every one of them had sold live stock and forage to the British and been generously paid, and the thefts of which they complained were trivial—even if their stories were true.

Wherever there had been a British camp one found a great litter of little bits of writing-paper, every tenth piece marked with a line of x x x x x or double or

treble lines of them, followed by the words, "Ever your sweetheart, Alice," or "Your very loving Molly." These were Tommy's letters from the farms of England and the servants' halls of her cities.

It seemed to me that all the Mollies and Alices wrote alike, in very bold, thick letters. And their kisses were so hearty and abundant that they stood out on the veldt, and were not to be passed unseen—though it did seem like sacrilege to notice them.

Dear rosy Molly in your gown of print and your flower-framed cottage in Derbyshire, never make your kisses any smaller, and do not complain that they spent their mere wasted skeletons on the desert veldt. Rather be proud that you thus sent to Africa the best things it had got—your brave lovers and your steadfast love.

Dear Alice, in your starched cap and apron, as I see you meeting the postman at your master's door in London, let me supplement the whisper in your heart by saying that Tommy deserved the four lines of tender crosses that were like a battalion of cupids, marching at the bottom of your letter. He was rough and dirty, and he knew his comrades apart from one another more by the stains and rents of their tunics and trousers than by their all-alike, grimy blistered faces. But he was a good fellow—brave, tireless, patient, uncomplaining, painfully sober throughout the war, and true as steel to his sweetheart at home.

Near Driefontein we came to the ranch-house of a German family named Mulke, and went in and had the inevitable coffee with them. There was a Boer ambulance doctor wandering about in the hall—a man attached to the German corps and afraid to go out and join his people. But of course the Mulkes were very glad the British had come—as they would have been if the Boers had come instead. And, of course, the British had stolen their fowls—and all the rest of the monotonously sickening humbug of their kind. There was one stroke of genuineness in their talk, and this was it :—

“Ve hat Lort Ropperts here to preakfast yesterday morning,” said Mrs. Mulke. “I vos so clad to see him. And my! ain’t he little to be so glever and great? And ve hat here der Brince of Deck, and a war writer of newsbabers named Hands, and der Gount Gleichen.

“‘Vot is your name?’ I said; and he said, ‘Gleichen’; und I said, ‘Not der Graf, berhaps;’ and he said, ‘Yes, I am Der Graf!’ und he vos in my kitchen. All of dem vos in der kitchen. My! such a lot of grade beople to be in my house! Und der Brince Deck said, ‘I vill show you a bicture of your Kaiserin, and it is in my waggon.’ Und he went oud und came again back und stuck his head in der kitchen window und said to my daughter, ‘tell your mother I am so sorry I can’d find der photograph of der Kaiserin.’ Vos it not nice for

him to dake so much trouble? My! he is so tall as der top of dat bicture vvhich hangs by der top of dat door."

We camped at Driefontein, where there had been a fearfully hot engagement two days before. Our tent was pitched beside a branch of the Australian hospital—then famed as the most excellent of army hospitals. Next day we were just behind the British as they swept the kopjes for Boers, and that evening we came upon Lord Roberts's transport, which deserves a longer article than this solely to itself. And yet it must get but a kodak snapshot and be done with.

First we came upon a great plain alive with oxen, and, further on, an orderly array of acres of buck waggons. A few miles further along we saw another huge herd of oxen, and another field full of waggons in mathematical array. Each of these masses of transport we supposed to be the whole of the army's supply.

On we rode, and on mounting a ridge we saw the entire veldt before us thickly covered with transport waggons—hundreds upon hundreds of them—and many times as many hundreds of oxen—and an army of blacks, their conductors. I never saw so many waggons, and I believe I never saw a tenth part of so many oxen.

The whole space was thronged with the transport, which moved like a majestic army in itself. Its front ranks were tailing out into a long queue, and trekking

away. The rest were being inspanned. The noise of the bellowing of the beasts, of the barbaric yelling of the negroes, of the swishing and cracking of their enormous whips, and of the jolting and creaking of the waggons was a din as difficult to describe as to forget.

On a side-road we drove past a mile of this extraordinary train of food, and then entered the great valley in front of Bloemfontein. And lo! for at least four or five miles before us the vanguard of the transport still reached away. We had not seen half of it until then. Guards at five paces apart lined a portion of our route. Cavalrymen in large forces dashed along past us. Full companies of infantry kept slow pace with the waggons in other places.

In time there came to be but one road, darkness fell, violent thunder, lightning, and rain burst upon the veldt, and at a mile and a half an hour we crept all night long towards Bloemfontein to the incessant tune of the cracking, air-slitting whips, and the tigerish yells of the vast-mouthed negroes.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE TAKING OF BLOEMFONTEIN

THAT grunting, creaking, many-thousand-throated, many-mile-long centipede of wheels instead of legs reached the end of the valley before daybreak on March 12th. Thousands of soldiers lingered behind and beside its tons of provisions, while a smaller force beat the hills commanding Bloemfontein. There were no armed Boers there offering to withstand them.

I rode into Bloemfontein just as the cavalry were entering. It is a very pretty little city, not unlike many other tree-decked, garden-crowded little towns, except that it is nearly all one-storied. Its store buildings are modern, new, and tasteful, and its legislative and executive buildings are such as one finds in the least populated parts of Australia and America. It has no manufactures. It is partly a capital in its atmosphere, but it is mainly domestic and semi-rural, and was founded by the English when they created the State as a buffer between the low-class Transvaal population and their own Cape Colony. Its capture was more like a festival than a disaster, but that was owing to the doublefaced-



ness of the few Boers, and many Germans and other foreigners there, who would have welcomed Kruger more sincerely. The army received an ovation. Union Jacks were flung out every here and there. The General and the troops were cheered. Flowers, ribbons of English red, white, and blue, fruit and sandwiches were given to the soldiers by the young ladies of the town.

There were several notable features of the British occupation of Bloemfontein—dramatic, humorous, or otherwise peculiar.

A few hours before the British took the town it was not known that it was to be theirs without a sixth and last battle. We understood that the Boers were massed on the kopjes south and south-west of Bloemfontein, and General French was ordered to drive them away. He quickly found that the hills were either unoccupied, or deserted by the Boers on his approach, but a little shelling had to precede his mastery of all the heights.

As soon as the correspondents who were with him realised that there was to be no defence of the town, two of them dashed along the valley and into the capital on horseback, ahead of everyone else. These were Mr. H. A. Gwynne, of Reuter's Agency, and Mr. Patterson, of the *Sydney Herald*. On the way they met a couple of men on bicycles, and were amazed to see them leap from their machines and throw up their hands in token of abject surrender and a desire to

escape instant death. They also met some men of the Royal Engineers rolling a drum of telegraph wire into the town. The place had not been taken. They had been ordered to take the wire along after the army, but they could not wait, so there they were plodding into an enemy's capital as unconcerned as so many street sweepers in Piccadilly.

The horsemen dashed on, paying no heed to the frightened bicyclists, and pressed forward into the city, where they excited disappointingly slight interest until an emotional man ran towards them shouting: "The first of the British! The first of the British!"

At the club they spread the news of the coming of the army, and this spurred several of the leading officials to undertake negotiations with them on behalf of the town. These gentlemen were piloted in their carriages out to General Roberts's headquarters on a rocky kopje. Mr. Gwynne was with the late G. W. Steevens and Mr. Peel when those three correspondents induced the citizens of Volo to surrender to them in the Turco-Greek war, and he felt a strong inclination to repeat that performance here in Bloemfontein. But he restrained himself. He appears to have felt a greater respect for British authority than he had shown for that of the Turks.

The Acting State Secretary, the Mayor, and the Landdrost were among those who went out to meet Lord Roberts. They wore linen shirts and clean linen

collars, and were greatly superior in appearance to the fighting Boers we have seen as our prisoners.

General Roberts shook hands with each man, and asked them what they had to say. They replied that they wished to surrender the city, and that the reason no reply had been sent to the British demand for a surrender within a period that had already expired was that the military Boers were relied on to send their answer, but had run away instead of either fighting or yielding. The committee asked that life and property within their town should be respected, and this Lord Roberts instantly promised, adding that, if they so desired, he would at once begin policing the streets.

After this the Acting State Secretary, Mr. Collins, formally delivered up the keys of the public buildings, which Lord Roberts accepted with a polite bow. A foreign consul then asked for protection for himself and the other consuls in the city, and the interview came to an end.

Lord Roberts then arranged for his progress through the capital. He ordered up the first brigade of cavalry, and followed this troop, leading his personal staff and his general staff. After these he placed the foreign attachés, the correspondents, and his bodyguard, and then came a long line of cavalry four abreast.

When this imposing procession started many citizens on bicycles came out to meet the conquerors, and when the town was entered a mighty burst of English

cheering broke from hundreds of throats. In the crowd a very few faces that may have been sullen or may only have been stolid broke the otherwise general expression of welcome and gratification.

As the procession moved slowly and with great dignity through the streets an unexpected and humorous incident delayed its progress. Taking advantage of the excitement and confusion, many negroes had broken into the Free State barracks, and were looting the building. Lord Roberts ordered a halt, and commanded that this should be stopped. The duty of driving the negroes away from the barracks fell upon the Duke of Westminster, Lord Stanley, Lord Dudley, General Pretymen, and the Honourable Seymour Fortescue, who hustled the natives about while the crowd and the army stood and looked on.

This done, the troops resumed their solemn march. At the Presidency there was another halt while the British flag was hoisted on the official staff. Several of the same distinguished gentlemen participated in this more grateful task. The flag that was eventually sent up was the beautiful silken one sent by Lady Roberts to her husband. Seymour Fortescue, R.N., was deputed to fasten the standard on the lanyard with true sailor knots, and for some reason he was painfully slow at the work. To lighten the strain the Bloemfontein populace sang "God Save the Queen."

When the flag was at last hauled to the staff-head

the troops repeated the anthem. When they had finished, and were standing erect and proud, despite their soiled and battered appearance, the people sang "Tommy Atkins" and "Soldiers of the Queen" with a wonderful and surprising effect, for no one had expected to hear those songs sung by the populace in the enemy's capital.

Of all that I saw of the process of occupation nothing affected me so much as the great parade of the majority of Lord Roberts's troops on the next morning—that of Wednesday. All the men had enjoyed a most unusual wash, and showed shiny faces and unwontedly clean hands, but their suits of khaki were so stained and discoloured, and their accoutrements were so worn and battered, that at first I feared the townsfolk would not fully appreciate the fact that they were washed. They were, indeed, a soiled and bedraggled lot. All had been soaked in the heavy rain of the preceding night, and their uniform had dried in wrinkles. I was sorry to feel that I, and not the others, knew how strange it felt to them to be clean once more. Presently I thought how hungry all must be, for a biscuit had been all they had to eat on more than one day, and not in weeks had any day brought them a single solid meal. I wished the gaping crowd could know this, and regale them with warm sympathy, if nothing more.

Next I noticed how proud every Tommy of them

was feeling—how briskly and lightly they marched, how high they held their chins, and how bright were all their eyes. I had momentarily misjudged the brave and uncomplaining lads. They had no wish for sympathy; they were no longer hungry; the stains and wrinkles on their clothing were well earned and proudly borne. I turned aside and whispered under my breath, "God bless Tommy Atkins. He has done his duty, and is satisfied with the reward of merely marching through the capital of the rich new territory he has given to the Queen and nation."

The Oxfords swept by, thinned in ranks; the Welshmen, fresh from the lurid jaws of Hades-like Paardeberg, strode lightly past; the brave men of Essex, covered with new glory, marched proudly along; the splendid Yorks, whose ranks had just been tattered by battle strokes, trooped jauntily by. Looking on at them all were thousands who never had heard of the feats these men were fresh from, or the dangers they had braved. But what did the soldiers care? What care their kith and kin at home? All alike in those ranks are Tommies, just as nearly all Tommies are alike—fearlessly doing their duty, cheerily bearing their hardships, laughing and singing defiance to hunger and heat, frost and fatigue; all genuine, unpretending, usually invincible soldiers of the Queen.

Here and there were English flags, and here and there a man or woman cried out, "God bless you,

boys." At one place two little girls ran out and pinned red, white, and blue ribbons to the soldiers' coats, and at another two young ladies distributed fruit and sandwiches—which more than one officer took as eagerly as the men in the ranks. A burly negro, whose face quivered with excitement, stood by and called out thousands upon thousands of times, "Thank you, thank you. Thank you for coming. Thank you."

Bloemfontein looked as if it ought to be the capital city of peace and domesticity. It is only a little bunch of white, grey, and red houses, and dainty ornamental little shop-buildings, but these are so set about with foliage and flowers, that the place seems to have been built in a park or public garden. As there are no manufactures, the place is all homes excepting the necessary shops.

At the Presidency, where Lord Roberts was quartered, there was a distinct legislative atmosphere, and you felt that you were in a national capital—albeit its scale is very small. The heart of the town is an open square, with the shops, the club, a hotel, and a public building facing it. In the middle of the square is the market shed, where a part of the often-honoured City Imperial Volunteers were headquartered, and where they slept on the greengrocers' counters by night.

In this square, on the night after we occupied the town, I witnessed a scene that was almost hallowed in my eyes. It must be explained, by way of preface, that



the British are a law-loving and a law-abiding people to a degree not approached by any other people I have ever seen. As Lord Roberts had laid down the law that all property in Bloemfontein was to be respected, and the enemy were to have courteous treatment, the army at once adopted a consistent course of behaviour. Consequently, the roaring lion crept into Bloemfontein a gentle lamb, a sucking dove in kindliness and modesty. The Boers had nailed tin sheets in front of their shops lest the soldiers should loot them, but now they began to rip these fortifications down, and to explain (like Boers even to the end) that they had put up the barricades against their own people, who were apt to be very lawless. At all events, down came the metal sheets, and out into the streets came the people to mingle with the officers, and stare at the occasional bodies of marching men going in and out of town.

The second night of British rule came, and in the market square at nine o'clock a drum corps and four Scotch pipers came to make what melody these prehistoric instruments will yield when duly tortured. Out came the young girls and their beaux, the wives and husbands, the children, the grey beards and pillars of the place—and hundreds of Tommies. Two days before the men had been killing each other; now they laughed and chatted, sang, and rubbed shoulders together. The band stopped playing and sang, and the

Boers clapped hands, while the English cheered. It was like a night at Earl's Court. If you had dropped into Bloemfontein then you could not have believed what you saw. In nothing was there a suggestion that a war was on, that you were in a conquered city, that many a score of the hands that clapped applause were freshly stained with the blood of those with whose comrades their owners fraternised.

It was a charming, a poetic, a blessed, but at the same time a most extraordinary, example of the striking contrasts in the lights and shades of war.

The Boers could not understand it. They would tell you if you asked them that they expected rudeness and enmity, harsh rules, and domineering insolence. Instead, they found themselves in the hands of quiet, civil, kindly people who seemed to want to be regarded as brothers. They did not understand it, and neither did I. I admired and revered it, but I did not see how all the savagery and bitterness of so bloody a war could be made to vanish in a day.

And this must be said for the people of Bloemfontein: since it takes two sides to make up a brotherhood, and two well-disposed parties to create a friendship, they deserve as much credit as the British do for the continuance of sweetness and light in this little metropolis of gentle domesticity, good nature and contentment.

It was altogether a wonderful situation. There were

unforgiving souls there to make exception to the rule, and emphasise the otherwise general goodwill.

"Oh, you may strut about and show yourself off here in town," said a Boer to a war correspondent, as one passed the other in the street, "but you will be potted and sniped at wherever you go through the country."

Again, an Englishman asked for breakfast in a second-class hotel in town, and it was refused.

"Can you tell me where I can get breakfast?" the German was asked. "I can only tell you that I am your enemy," was the reply.

It was the Germans who had all along been most bitter the English people told me—and there are a great many Germans there in business.

## CHAPTER XIV

### WAITING, NOT WASTING TIME

THERE was much difference between the people at home and the people in the army in South Africa. At home, when Lord Roberts rested for a month or six weeks in Bloemfontein, the people began to complain, to entertain doubts of the great man's generalship, and to desire that he should account for the whys and wherefores of his behaviour. This must not be denied to-day, because we of the army know it, and we knew it then. It rang out in the telegrams to the correspondents, it was stated in letters to the officers, it even made itself heard in the House of Commons. Aye, so mercurial is humanity, and so fickle is a people entrusted with self-government, that since I came home I have read in the pages of a daily journal a jubilant leader calling general attention to the wonders performed by Lord Roberts in one month, and yet in another month the same editors were wondering how his later inaction could be explained.

In the first editorial we learned that in one short month this modern Marlborough and Wellington had

relieved Kimberley, freed Ladysmith, captured the leading Boer general and his army, and entered Bloemfontein. And yet in the next month the question was soberly put whether there was any good reason for Lord Roberts to fall into Methuen's habit of picknicking for a month of Sundays whenever he came to a pleasant place. I would ask the public to remember this—if it would do any good. But it will not. I long ago gave up the task of reforming this world. I am now waiting until my soul is disembodied, and I can fly to Mars. That planet is smaller, and I have a dim hope that its people are wiser—for surely no others except ourselves go on repeating the same old follies, mistakes, and weaknesses, for twenty centuries on end.

As if it were not enough to take Bloemfontein, capture Cronje, clear the Boers off the railway in the west, relieve Kimberley, and rescue Ladysmith by reflex action!

If Lord Roberts had been content with these achievements and come home then, his glory would have been that of the greatest commander-in-chief now living; surely far the greatest who has proved himself on the battlefield.

But wherever Lord Roberts went and whatever he did, his army could do no more. It had worked and fought and suffered; been robbed of food, and horses, and strength; been strained, and exposed, and tired,

and shot down to the last degree that even such an army could stand. It had come to a halt that must have been accepted even had it not been ordered. It could not go on without food, it could not drag either food or men without horses and mules and oxen, it could not know what sort of warfare to go on with until its commander learned the manner and spirit in which the conquered Free Staters took their defeat. There were bridges to be rebuilt, rails to be relaid, hospitals to be set up, officers to be appointed in place of the dead and sick and wounded, a new provisional or martial government to be established, and protected until it won its way.

The army did not know all this, though it did realise a part of it. But the army did not care. It left it all to "Bobs." That was the difference between the people in England and the makers and defenders of their empire. The people in England grumbled and "wanted to know, you know." The army whistled and sang and rested and recuperated, saying only, "Bobs is doing it. Bobs knows."

To be in a conquered capital, to witness the lights and shadows of conquest and submission, to feel the enthusiasm of the army thrilling you, and yet to note the occasional cold draughts of sullenness or protest from the enemy—these were sensations new to most of us, and almost so to me.

The only conquerors I ever marched with before

were Turks, who elbowed Greeks aside—and that is not nearly the same as being with the British in Boerdom. Some had a time week, loafing and feeding after the breathless pace Lord Roberts led us, and the shortness of food that went with him. Others made little expeditions, mending railways or “bill-sticking,” as was called the distribution of the Field Marshal’s proclamation inviting the Free Staters to lay down their arms. And some continued to be shot at in petty skirmishes on the surrounding veldt.

Quiet reigned in Bloemfontein while we stayed there; even 30,000 foreign troops in and about this flowery, leafy capital seemed not able to make anything but quiet. A few active enemies were arrested, and a few silly folk followed them to Capetown, or else were warned for wearing Free State buttons, and for being too openly disgruntled by the coming of the army. One who escaped molestation was a shop girl who would not wait on the soldiers, who were pouring out their petty earnings in a cataract of silver in every shop, and apparently upon everything that their money would purchase—useful and useless alike.

We heard that there was a great deal of Boer spirit left in the place; but it hid itself in its houses, and was a great deal more quiet and circumspect than the open delight of the people of English stock who lived here through the war, and, as one of them told me, had to control their faces as if they were masks when they



walked the streets, lest the Boers should read in their features some suspicious suggestion of enmity or of rejoicing over the successes of the British arms.

The Boers used to toss white feathers into the carriages of the British families whose men would not go out to war for the Dutch. Then, again, a black list of pro-British "misbehavers" was kept, and a woman who merely waved her hand in token of "farewell" to a train-load of British prisoners bound for Pretoria was told that the act was recorded in the police books, and that she must be very careful after that. A great number of Englishwomen got black marks in the police book, you may be sure.

The presiding genius of this military capital of the new colony was, of course, the Field Marshal. Lord Roberts lived in what is called "The Residency," or palace of the President, which was hastily left behind by ex-President Steyn when that political misfit felt an urgent impulse to set up another capital in his top-hat at Kroonstadt. The Residency is a very presentable executive mansion, with a distinct air of rulership about its exterior, and a sort of official atmosphere indoors which you cannot miss or mistake.

It contains a large drawing or reception-room, an equally large dining-hall, and a ball-room twice as large as either.

The reception-room is cheaply wall-papered, and the heavy carpet is puckered up in welts all over the floor,

but it is a big room and has great cut-glass candelabra and a large mirror and many chairs and tables—at which Lord Roberts at once set dukes and lords to toil with pens. The dining-room is as bare as it can well be but it is imposing and well-proportioned. It contains a picture of the late President Brand, a table, and some chairs—two tables, in fact, after Lord Roberts came, for the Field Marshal ate at his own little table with his own guests, while his staff of famous noblemen encircled the big table. When no meal was on soldier-clerks rattled type-writing-machines on the main dining-table.

I just peeped into the huge ball-room, and saw that it was another workshop full of busy officers at tables, for the head of the army carried a beehive of industry with him. His toilers were the most distinguished men of England by birth or achievement, but they seemed to have given over fighting and starving only to work like badgers—wherein they were less well off than Tommy Atkins, who was trotting about from shop to shop, quite as much at home as if he had always lived there, and having a delightful time.

Bloemfontein, always a capital, but always a village, had its normal population of about 4,000 swollen by the influx of troops. In consequence the pavements were crowded, and the streets roared with army waggons. Thousands of troops were in the town, and the rest of our army of 80,000 men was in a circle of camps on

the veldt, within three to five miles of the market-place.

The shops were soon denuded of everything, and even food became scarce, because the farm waggons were emptied by the suburban camps.

The circulation of the daily paper, which was four hundred before this, rose to from five to seven thousand a day.

The hotels were packed, the club walled in by horses, and even the hallways were blocked with officers representing all the regular regiments and every colony.

An immense trade was done in drinks, but these refreshments were confined to gin, vermouth, and port wine. There was not a drop of whiskey to be had owing to the military monopoly of the railway. Even the materials for the manufacture of soda water were exhausted.

Winter was perceptibly hastening its advent. There was an immense demand for woollen khaki, but the tailors had sold out everything except a green cloth like the uniform of the foresters in Germany, and this was becoming popular because there was nothing else obtainable.

An orchestral concert was given in the market square at supper time, and thereafter the town became as dead as a door-nail. Only a few people with military passes were allowed in the streets, in order to prevent communication with the Boers outside. Indeed, it was a

fact that some of the townsfolk who lived neighbourly with the British were in the habit of sneaking out of their houses at dark, joining their commandoes, fighting with them, and sneaking back into town again to rest.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF WAR

AS soon as we reached Bloemfontein Lord Roberts added to his military duties those of Administrator, or Military Governor—of a Viceroy practically. He appointed a police force, a provost marshal and staff, a military governor of the town, a mounted police force for the entire conquered portion of the Free State, a chief of the Railway service, and attended to the one thousand and one demands created by the new situation.

Sir Alfred Milner came—at great risk to himself, as it seemed—and visited the capital of the new British colony, while among many notables who followed or preceded him were Lord Elphinstone, Lady Edward Cecil, Mr. Burdett-Coutts, Sir Ellis Ashmead Bartlett, the late Admiral Maxse, and others—all of whom had to put up with such fare and accommodations as could be had at two of the country taverns.

We all put on what appearance of civilisation we could make, giving bad dinners at the hotel, and worse ones at the headquarters of the subordinate generals,

the best of the poor and scanty fare of the place being secured for the Residency by the enthusiastic members of the Field-Marshal's staff. Two notable occasions were the dinner given to the foreign military attachés by Lord Roberts at the Residency, and the dinner which four of us war correspondents arranged at the railway station in honour of the High Commissioner, the Field-Marshal, and Rudyard Kipling. This dinner, given to these distinguished gentlemen by Mr. James Barnes, of the American Press, Percival Landon of *The Times*, H. A. Gwynne of Reuter's Agency, and myself, took place on the night of March 28th.

We selected the railway station restaurant because it was the largest dining-room in town and the cook was the most expert man of his calling in that woe-begone and inhospitable region. But it mattered very little about the room or the cook where such a delightful break in the routine of army life was concerned, for Shakespeare's dictum "Small cheer and great welcome makes a merry feast," could but be true when so notable and interesting a company assembled.

We had for our guests not only Sir Alfred Milner, Lord Roberts, and Mr. Kipling, for whom we gave the dinner, but General Pole-Carew, General Hector Macdonald, General Sir Henry E. Colville, General Forestier Walker, General G. T. Pretyman, Governor of the capital, Lord Stanley, Lord Kerry, Colonel Neville Chamberlain, Colonel Girouard, Colonel Otter of the Cana-

dian Forces, Mr. Hanbury Williams, Lester Ralph, W. B. Wollen, H. C. Shelley, Mr. H. F. Prevost Battersby, and Mr. W. Blelock. Lord Kitchener was to have been present, but was not yet back from Prieska, where he was quickly smothering a rebellion.

The artists, Messrs. Wollen and Lester Ralph, designed an especial menu-card for each guest, the army sent a full band, the dinner was fairly good, and the wines were excellent; but the speeches—they were never to be forgotten by those who heard them, and never to be reported or repeated for those who did not. The High Commissioner was toasted first, and spoke of his earlier life on the press, of which it was evident that he had both proud and pleasant recollections. The wonderful man of the hour and idol of his army paid his hosts the high compliment of asking whether he “might not call us comrades,” we journalists, of whom he said that we shared the same dangers and exposure, hunger, fatigue, and thirst, as he and his troops. Rudyard Kipling, most powerful of English writers, who became after that our colleague and companion in *The Friend* office, pledged us all to drink to the health of that personage who had turned this kingdom into a true empire by riveting her colonies to her side and who had added vast new territories to the realm. And on this he gave us the name of—*Kruger*!

Another notable gathering during this period of apparent inactivity was a meeting of the Army Temper-



ance Association, at which Lord Roberts was the principal figure. He pointed out to the soldiers the advantages of joining the association. Every member was known to the commanding officer, and for important posts men were often chosen because of their membership.

The soldier hearers dwelt on every word that fell from the lips of the man they loved. When he spoke of "the army I now have the great honour of commanding," Lord Roberts betrayed a depth of feeling in his voice.

He was proud to be the leader of "the best-behaved army in the world." They had marched uncomplainingly, and endured all the hardships of the campaign, and, he exclaimed, "how well they had fought!"

Then he added, merrily, "The whole army have been members of the association. Modder water was all they had to drink, and sometimes little of that."

A capital and high-class concert, promoted by other correspondents, led by Mr. Bennet Burleigh, and greatly strengthened by the war artists under the leadership of Mr. W. B. Wollen, was the last of these novel and inspiring entertainments, which could not have been carried out except with Lord Roberts's consent, and which were heartily approved of and aided by him. He wanted the men of all ranks to be amused, entertained, and lifted out of the strain to which they had been subjected. "I wired for permission to bring a

music hall company to Bloemfontein," a theatrical manager said to me afterwards, "and had an immediate answer urging me to come—but there were no performers to be got in Africa."

## CHAPTER XVI

### BITTER HATE FOR SWEETEST LOVE

THE "Miss Bloemfontein" episode deserves more, perhaps, than the passing reference which has been made to it by me in my correspondence, and elsewhere in this book. The reader must know that after our fighting, hunger, and exposure on the veldt, the mere sight of the garden-like little capital of the smaller Boer State was refreshing in a high degree. In the excess of their pleasure at finding themselves at last in a town where there were hotels and a club and modern shops, some men went to the extreme of likening the place to "home"—to an English village. It did not deserve such praise. It was merely a few sprawling, ragged gum trees, and some below-the-average gardens that fascinated us who had grown deadly tired of the bare brown monotony of the veldt. Bloemfontein's outward attractions were very thin, while below and beneath them was a state of sanitation and a condition of nature such as to render the place a veritable death-trap, wherein our men fell prostrated by thousands with fever and other illnesses. Enteric, the inhabitants

frankly told us, had been epidemic there every spring and summer for years.

However, I was no different from the others, and easily fell a victim to first appearances. I do not blame myself for being bewitched by the foliage and the flowers ; but that I—of all men—I, who had unceasingly warned the generals in the field and the people at home against the treachery, falseness, and “slimness” of the Boers, should have been, for a single day, tricked into reposing confidence in their protestations of friendship for their conquerors—that was almost a disgrace as well as a pity, and a thing to wonder at.

How completely I was done by these double-faced Boers and their fellow-citizens of other blood, who outdid even the Boers in cunning and false pretences of friendship, the article I wrote for *The Friend* will prove. I only ask the reader to remember that we were hungry for a rest from fighting and from distrusting those who should have played the true part of friends. And when we entered Bloemfontein and the people cheered us and sang “God Save the Queen” and “Tommy Atkins,” we fancied we had come to a place that boasted a kinship with England, and was anxious to prove it. This was the feeling that prompted the article entitled “A Love Letter to Miss Bloemfontein,” which was published in the paper edited by Messrs. Landon, Gwynne, F. W. Buxton,

and myself, before Rudyard Kipling joined us and which I now reproduce.

*THE FRIEND, March 17, 1900.*

TO MISS BLOEMFONTEIN.

A LOVE LETTER.

Come, little Miss Bloemfontein, sit down beside me and let me hold your dimpled hand, and look into those eyes which have caught the wonderful blue of these heavens and the tints of your gardens and your bowery streets. I think our whole army likes you, you belle of the Boer aristocracy. You certainly change your lovers easily and lightly, but soldiers are reported not to mind a little coquetry when they are far from home. You have tripped out to meet us so enticingly, you have so led us into your bower with your warm little hand, and you have spoken so kindly to us that we dislike to think you were quite the same to your earlier beaux in their homespun suits, their flapping hats, and their lavish indulgence in whiskers and beards, which, as you must know, are the cheapest of luxuries—prodigalities in which misers indulge to make a show, and save a barber's bill.

You might have been hateful to us, and we could not have blamed you, for we came too nearly as certain other soldiers came to the Sabine sisterhood, with blood in our eyes and weapons in hand, fancying that

you would cling to your old love, and never dreaming that he would run away and leave you unprotected in this placid and pretty little boudoir that you have set up here. You won't forget that little episode, will you, Miss Bloemfontein? And you did take note, didn't you, my dear? that when we found you deserted, all forlorn, we changed from lion to lamb, from blustering warrior to soft-spoken wooer. We hurled no harsh word at your people, and did their goods no violence. Even now we stand aside, in our own place, crowding none of your servitors, but smiling back the smiles you bathe us in, and breathing our admiration softly—for you are a pretty miss and gentle—and we are not so stupid as to fail to see that you are no Boadicea, but a lover of peace and concord, if ever one has lived on earth since the Muses took to the clouds.

Sweetness of loving sighs its soft song of delight in every breeze that shakes the leaves of your tree-garlands. Domesticity asserts its command, by your order, in the aspect of every cottage in your parklike nest. Homely comfort radiates from the hearths and the faces of all who live under your delightful rule.

I never anywhere saw a prettier or more astonishing scene than I witnessed in your market square on the second night of our stay, which we hope you will invite us to prolong to eternity. We sent a few stained and greasy melodists with pipes and drums to play in the square, partly to show you that we had dethroned

Mars, and substituted Pan in the best niche in our hearts, and partly to set our own pleasure tripping to gay tunes. And lo! out you came with your maidens and their lovers, your old men and matrons, and the children within your gates. And we all forgot that we had quarrelled with your cast-off favourite, that each of us had shed the other's blood, and that we had come to you with an anger which we supposed you matched within your own fair bosom. Your people and ours touched elbows and laughed and sang together. For one, I was amazed. Of all the sharp contrasts of strife I know of none so bold and strong as that scene when it is compared with the scenes of only a few days back at Paardeberg and Driefontein.

It was your magic, your witchery, your tact that brought it about, you South African beauty. Without these helps we never could have enjoyed that evening as we did, and that evening was the bridge which spanned the gulf between the angry past and the happy present in our lives, little miss.

Draw closer, Miss Bloemfontein; let our arms touch, and the thrill of ardent friendship vivify our new relation. You do like the British, don't you, dear? You don't have to be British yourself, you know. You can stay on being Dutch, and piously Presbyterian, and all the rest. They will respect whatever you admire, and will promise to make you richer, freer, happier, and even more beautiful—with the ripened charms of a long-



assured content, if only you will let your chief predicant publish the banns next Sunday—or sooner if you will.

J. R.

Two days passed and the editors of *The Friend* were astonished at receiving a reply written in a lady's handwriting, and having all the appearance of genuineness. Investigation revealed the fact that a young miss of the town, incensed beyond endurance by the reflections upon the loyalty of Bloemfontein to the Boers, had written us her protest. It read as follows :—

TO MR. ENGLISHMAN.

A LOVELESS LETTER.

Come, tall Mr. Englishman, and sit down beside me, but for the love of Heaven, do not look into my eyes lest they scorch you with a fiery "hate of hate." The blue of mine eyes may be perilously near that blue which men have named electric, and such an electric shock of scorn would they shoot that you would wish yourself amidst the turmoil of war again, some of whose bolts and bombs have taken the lives of our fathers, brothers, friends! You will not wonder, then, that I do not like your whole army or any part thereof, although it may have done me the great and unwished-for honour of liking me—or you, the conqueror of the land which is mine by the same right as your little

island is yours—the right of old tradition, which is so great a factor in the history of nations, and in which our land abounds—the right of residence which has been ours since our peacefully ruled and hitherto prosperous little Free State was created—the right of love for the land of our birth—the right of pride in our despised beaux, with their homespun suits and lavish beards and whiskers, who have gone out to fight with such bravery for their cause and country.

Surely, Mr. Englishman, you of all men should be able to appreciate this factor in them, you who pride yourself on being the bravest man, of the bravest of living nations. Were this factor missing in them would you not have been here five long months ago? Surely, you, I say, should be able to overlook such small matters as the bad cut of their coats and the length of their beards. You should know that greatness does not lie in outward seeming.

Please do not say “Miss Bloemfontein tripped out to meet us enticingly”; say, rather, little Miss Uitlander, who has, as you rightly think, by no means hitherto scorned our homespun youths, and to whom we extended a loving hand when she came, and who now, in return for this, unnecessarily flaunts your colours in our faces and welcomes you too kindly. Much bitter sorrow was there, sly sir, when you entered this loved home of ours; I and my sisters, who felt as would your English dames were another William the Conqueror

to take their island home from them, lay in dumb anguish, and writhed when the word went forth, "we have fallen into bondage," "our enemy hath us in his grasp"—and our cup of bitterness was more than full.

We do cling to our old love, who left us with much misgiving to your tender mercies. Mr. Englishman, fain would he have stayed to protect us but that he had his command to go—and this is another thing which you, who think so much of discipline, should be able to appreciate. Though, for fear of your displeasure, we must hide our feelings, you are hateful to us, oh slayer of our brothers and taker of our home !

We will not forget, Mr. Englishman, and are truly grateful to you, that you behaved to us with common courtesy and stood aside to let us pass ; but surely you, the politest of polite men, would not take credit for that which should be the birthright of all gentlemen. We dwell not in times of Sabine sisterhoods, good sir.

And if little Miss Uitlander bathes you in smiles, and lisps pretty nothings into your much-astonished ear, call but to mind that she comes from "your own far countree," and has here learned this way of welcoming the conqueror.

I am no Boadicea, say you. Oh, sir, you mistake grievously. I would smite you with mine own hands were I able. Did you perhaps not catch a glimpse of

me in General Cronje's laager, whither I went to share the danger with my brother and cheer him in his arduous task?

True it is that homely comfort abounds in our cottages, and should it not be so? Perhaps there was a time, too, when your stately sister did not scorn to keep house, instead of attending theatres, *soirées*, *musicales*, at-homes. Evidently Miss Uitlander forgot the divine music of Queen's Hall and Covent Garden when she crowded to do justice to the awful and untuneful melodies to which your English bandsmen treated her on the market square, but, you see, "it is so long since she left 'home,' and it is sweet to hear those sounds which come straight from dear old England." I, sir, stopped my ears with cotton wool, for whatever Miss Bloemfontein is, she is musical, and even had I been pleased to see you, I could never have allowed myself to be tortured with those fragments of the Divine art. Poor Pan, he stood afar on the topmost steeple of the Dutch Church and played his pipes and wept, and had you not been so absorbed in "tripping to your gay tunes" you might have heard faintly stealing over our ancient towers: "Heeft burghers hers t'lied der Vreijheid aan," while the organ within our "piously Presbyterian" edifice echoed the anthem which was caught up by the instrument in your exclusively English cathedral, and Miss Bloemfontein heard the echo and was comforted.

And, now, Mr. Englishman, do you fully realise that I am not pleased to see you, that I hate to have you here, I—a real daughter of the soil—and if to-morrow I could turn you out I would do so joyously, while little Miss Uitlander would stand by, her lovely eyes moist with grateful tears, and whisper, “that is right,” or perhaps push you with her tiny left hand while she once more extended her right to my badly-dressed brothers, as they came over the top of the Bloemfontein hill.

The gulf between the angry past and the still more angry present will never be bridged, Mr. Englishman. You have made Afrikanderdom by fighting us, and have awakened in our breasts the knowledge that we are of another sort than yourselves. Only now, with the “schwaanen lied” sounding in our ears do we feel what it is to have a country—to be a nation.

MISS BLOEMFONTEIN.

Supposing that *The Friend* was now likely to become the duelling ground of the young lady and one of its editors, if not also of her friends and British or Uitlander loyalists, we planned to publish a final word on our side, and give her the privilege of answering back. Then, we decided, the time would have come when we could politely announce that the correspondence was closed. With this in our minds we published my reply to her letter, and waited for an answer. We

were doomed to wait. It never came. She had the wit to give the man the last word—and, probably, to laugh at him.

The following was the response which she decoyed us into making while never intending to pursue the subject any further herself:—

### THE MAN'S LAST WORD.

DEAR MISS BLOEMFONTEIN,—If there is doubt about which young lady it is who has made us welcome here, there is none at all about the genuineness of your letter and yourself. Its sheets exhale the subtle perfume of the mimosa flower, its strong, free writing reveals the confidence, health, and high spirits of the graceful rider of the veldt. Thank God (and thank you, also, my dear), there is no line or phrase of resistance to our suit in all your letter but has a tender phrasing or carries a compliment—so that we know you do not dislike us a tenth so much as you hate the thought of seeming light-of-love, of feeling that we have dared to pity you, of fancying we think you are to be won for the mere asking.

Sweetheart, that was a clumsy letter of ours if it ruffled your maidenly sensitiveness with such misapprehensions. Henry V. was not the only one, or the last of us Englishmen, who could war with men better than he could woo women. And as Katharine looked

through young Hal's rough armour into his warm and loyal heart, so we ask you to do with us.

Well, well, so it was your cousin, Miss Uitlander, whose azure eyes and twining fingers sent me into my rhapsody of love, while you, the true Katharine, the real princess, have held back, hid in some leafy bower of your pretty capital. Ah, well, it was not her hand that took our heart captive. It was not her eyes that slew us. What we loved was the essence of your soul and spirit, which breathed upon us from your parklike surroundings, from your trees and gardens, from the pretty, happy homes of your subjects. It was you we loved, dear neighbour, you whom we have admired through all your youth and never quarrelled with and never known to be at fault.

As I wrote on Saturday, we still stand aside and look upon your charms of peaceful domesticity, all garlanded for your bridegroom. Still, too, we see your selfish, scheming guardian of the past fleeing from the wreck and ruin into which he has plunged your people. And we see your sworn champions in similar flight, leaving you forlorn, deserted. It is eminently womanly of you to defend those faithless gallants rather than solicit pity for yourself. It is the true maidenhood in you which makes you retire to your bower until you have forced us to acknowledge your value and earn your love. If we misjudged you, and fancied you had tripped out to put your hand in ours, it was only



because we were so eager and so smitten. We like you better as you are, shy and modest, proud and pure.

That deft touch of your pen upon the quality of our music—it was—I mean to say we find no fault in you for—but no, we may not be disloyal even to our pipes. It was the best we had to offer, and when better comes from home we fancy that even you will cease to barricade your pearly ears against it. We shall enjoy hearing Pan set your sighs to melody. We promise not to drive him away, and he shall ever play your songs just as he trills the lays of ever so many fair maidens who throng around our Queen, and who remember the chains she has stricken from their limbs, without for an instant forgetting the tradition which still knits each to her past and her kindred in as many distant lands.

You speak of the “great honour” of our liking you. You extol our bravery. You admit our “tender mercies” and our love of order. You say you will not forget our courtesy to your people, or our modesty. You call us “the politest of polite men”—ah, dear little Afrikander belle, we treasure each word in each of those sentences. We cannot help taking heart of hope. If you can speak us so fair to-day, when the whispers of your old lover still sound in your ears, what may we may not expect in time to come? We will not try to hurry your heart, but we warn you we shall melt it.

For we love you, and there is no selfish prompting, no hope of mercenary gain in our affection. We love you because you are irresistible, even with your dimpled little hand clenched, and perhaps partly because of the lightning that flashes from your pretty eyes.

J. R.

## CHAPTER XVII

### WAR CORRESPONDENTS OF TO-DAY

ALTHOUGH newspaper correspondents were no new factor in the South African War, some were of a sort to persist until they produced two great changes—one in the relations of correspondents and the military, and the other in the manner in which wars are to be reported. The war correspondent may be “the curse of modern armies,” as Lord Wolseley has declared, but he will endure in British armies so long as Great Britain and her people are as wholly free as at present. That he will do a different work in the future, and must be drawn from a different grade in journalism, is very evident. With the “war expert,” or military specialist, in the editorial rooms at home, writing with a broader view of the field of war than any single reporter at the front can possibly obtain, we see one reason why the hide-bound, old-fashioned war correspondents must quickly step aside.

Some correspondents are made welcome at the mess tables of the commanders, and to the intimate companionship of the brightest men in the armies. Only

think what that means to the newspapers who employ such men, and to their readers. Possibly a selection of censors for their fitness will follow—but one opens up a very wide subject when appointments for fitness are suggested in some armies.

With this new method for satisfying the largest public must come the respect of the army for the correspondents, instead of its reluctantly granted tolerance.

Whether this Boer war has been peculiar in respect of the social and intellectual weight of the men sent from England to report it I do not know, but I do know that too many of the correspondents were, intellectually, as easy to beat as an egg—and too many were otherwise lacking.

The attitude towards the Press of some censors, in the dreary days before Lord Roberts took command of all the forces, was such as to make the best journalistic work impossible, and the status of the correspondents insupportable to any who took pride in their calling or in their self-respect.

I have no hesitation in repeating that in a large degree this was because so many correspondents were not such men as should have been sent to represent great newspapers; therefore the editors who sent them were responsible for the difficulties which all the correspondents encountered. It is the editors who need to be educated and reformed rather than the military men.

Of all the armies in the world, the British, as it is at present constituted, is the one to be the most particular with in this regard.

To send men whom it was impossible for the officers to regard as comrades, and men who would not hesitate to break the rules of the guild unless they were certain of severe punishment, was a crime against the honour of the profession. It was to govern such men that the strictest of the censorship rules had to be made. The result was that the representatives of the dignity and honour of the profession were beset with limitations which carried with them both reproach and distrust, and crippled their work. To put the case in another way, there were correspondents at the front who would have been trusted to write whatever they desired, had it not been that there were other correspondents whose poor judgment, worse taste, and careless treatment of facts dragged the entire corps down to a low level.

It is certain that the mere reporters of battles and military movements are now outclassed and antiquated. Men of broader grasp and more human and varied interests are to report the next British wars. To obtain the reports which the public demands will ensure the appointment of correspondents who will insist upon respectful treatment and liberal regulations by the censors. Thus we shall have a pen-and-ink millennium automatically produced. The public will cease to be bored by accounts of troops for ever being "moved two

miles to the north-east of the enemy's right flank"; the more discerning editors will see their readers multiply by leaps and bounds, the correspondents will be liberated from an odious bondage, and the military mind will broaden, until the army echoes the sagacious words of Lord Roberts, "The more you criticise, the more I shall learn of what mistakes are being made."

I cannot help thinking that the broad attitude of the Field-Marshal must have much effect in bringing about this millennium. He gave all liberty and no licence to the newspaper writers, only insisting that they should submit to censorship whatever they meant to telegraph. This was wise and necessary because there might be "leakages" all along the wires, and, again, whatever was cabled to England was certain to be cabled back to the Boers if it was news of importance to them. "Go where you please," said he, "write what you like, criticise whenever you feel like it, because the more you criticise the more I shall learn." To put trust in, and responsibility upon men in that way was certain to increase their self-respect; and to have it understood that instant expulsion would follow any flagrant breach of decorum, or the rules of the censor, was quickly seen to have good effect upon those who had leaned towards offensiveness in various ways.

I once said that it was not necessary for a war correspondent to incur danger on the battle-field. I have altered that opinion. It makes me laugh at myself

when I put side by side the view I then held and the experience I have since gained.

I had been on the edge of the Chino-Japanese war, in which the Japanese got tremendous fame upon a very slender and dubious basis; and I had followed the Turks in their promenade into Greece: but I did not then fully realise that these were not real wars. When we come to consider the relations of a correspondent to a real war, perhaps the experience of a certain talented artist will serve to illustrate them better than any other case that I can state. He was simply an artist—not a soldier or a seeker after martial glory—anxious only to see what effective situations each battle might contain or create. Nothing was further from his desire than to serve as a target for Boer rifle-fire. In saying this I do not mean to belittle him. I shared with him his sensible ambition to see all he could, and meet with as little danger as possible.

He succeeded at Belmont, but at the battle of Graspan, after establishing himself in a nice, safe, and commanding position, he found himself, in half an hour, amid such a hail of bullets that it seemed as if all Boerdom had singled him out as a mark for its concentrated desire for slaughter. He lay still with becoming dignity, and found himself alive at the end of the fight—alive, and resolved, with all the strength of his will, never again, while he lived, to mix his body up with flying bullets. At Modder River, in some



manner which I have forgotten, he was suddenly pursued by shells and flying shrapnel, and made his way out of that danger, only to find himself under such Mauser fire that the bullets came in ropes. It was fun to hear him talk about the duty of correspondents after this second experience. To begin with, his was a round, chubby face, lit by steady, grave eyes, and he had a way of merely mentioning his own experiences, incidentally, with a gravity too droll to be either described in words or listened to without merriment. He canvassed the corps of correspondents at short intervals, and reported to each one that all the rest were resolved with him never to get under fire again.

And then came the fight at Maaghersfontein. There was the advance in black and rainy night, then the greyish threat of dawn, then the hellish fusillade from the Boer trenches at the Highlanders, only a few rifle-lengths away. After that the panic, the confusion confounded, the awful dropping of scores upon scores of dead men, the reeling of ever so many wounded, the stampede to the rear, the shouting of the officers trying to restore order. And, finally, there was the artist, tousled, mud-stained, breathless, but still with the same round, cherubic face, and the same grave, well-considered speech. He was coming out of the jaws of death. He had been in the thick of the hell which, for a minute or two, daunted the tigers of the British army.

“ You see,” said he, in his most matter-of-fact way, “ I was attached to one of the Highland regiments, and when we advanced this morning I went along with my battalion. It was bitter cold and raining, and it was too dark for me to grope about by myself, so I meant to advance with the rest until we got near the front, and then let them go ahead while I found a good vantage-ground for myself, out of danger. All of a sudden, as I was marching along in the very front, a streak of fire burst before us as if out of the earth. We were attacked, and in a trap. Men fell all around me. There was a stampede, and I ran with the others. The worst of it was that I was wearing my spurs, and the men kept stepping on them and throwing me down. When I was down they trampled upon me ; and, as fast as I got up, I was thrown down again. And all the time the bullets were coming like stones in a hail-storm.”

His case proves how wrong I was to assert that a correspondent need not endanger his life on the battle-field. And yet, I am informed that the artist managed to keep out of danger after Maaghersfontein. If this be true, the point of his example cuts both ways.

I know another man of great merit in all that makes an accomplished and modest gentleman, who went about his duty soberly and thoroughly, facing danger whenever it could not be properly avoided, and never

admitting, by word or hint or shrug, that he gave it a thought. Where thousands upon thousands were valourous, he was accounted the peer of the bravest. After months of campaigning, he took ill of what was termed a slow African fever, but it seemed to me beyond doubt that his malady was pure nervous prostration. He was too sensitive and imaginative to look on at the business of fighting and slaughter. Though he owned the bodily strength to endure hunger, thirst, and exposure to sun, frost, and prolonged wettings, his nerves were too fine for the strain to which they were put. The death of several warm friends, the sufferings of men all around him, and the riot of his imagination when he walked steadily and coolly in and out of many battles, all proved too much for his nerves, too revolting to his fine nature.

Certain correspondents were complimented as perhaps no others have been in any previous war, or by any other general. These four were Mr. Percival Landon, of the *Times*; Mr. H. A. Gwynne, of Reuter's Agency; Mr. F. W. Buxton, of the Boer-suppressed Johannesburg *Star*; and myself. We were asked to undertake, as a committee of the war correspondents, the editorship and control of all the departments of a daily newspaper for such time as the army remained in Bloemfontein.

The ultra-Boer organ, the Bloemfontein *Express*, had been stopped, and we continued the issues of its

rival, then known as "The Friend of the Free State," a title at once simplified as "*The Friend*."

There never was, within my knowledge, a newspaper so full of typographical errors and of poetry—either real or so-called. Our Boer compositors contributed the mistakes, and Tommy Atkins sent us the rhymes. In the ease with which he pumped his muse, and the abundance of the results, we early came to know that the British army is an organised host of poets—or at least of aspirants who are in the condition of the tiny child to whom the magistrate exclaimed, "is it possible that you are already a thief?" and who modestly replied, "no your worship, but I 'opes to be." So deeply has Mr. Kipling stirred the Tommy's heart with those verses which treat of or appeal to the soldier that—not to exaggerate ridiculously—one fancies that every tenth man in the ranks aspires to be regarded as a disciple of this inspired and inspiring master. The ordinary Tommy poem was one thing when it came to us, a better thing sometimes when it left us—in the hands of Kruger, the office-boy—and still another thing when the "proof" came back from the hands of the Boer type-setters.

Despite its whimsicalities, *The Friend* was a dignified newspaper, and very nearly a complete one. The largest daily circulation of any Bloemfontein newspaper had been 400 copies, but we regularly sold 5,000 to 5,500 copies daily. Had we known that we should

conduct the paper during an entire month (March 16 to April 16, 1900), we could have sold at least 10,000 copies a day by sending the papers in carts to the outer camps on the veldt. We published Reuter's telegrams from all over the world, and the Capetown *Argus's* tidings of what went on in South Africa.

Mr. Gwynne contributed a notable series of articles on the military lessons of the war, and these provoked other articles by professional experts. We were permitted to act as spokesmen for Great Britain and the army, using our own ideas and language, in explaining to the Boers the future policy of their conquerors, and in cautioning them not to overstrain the imperial inclination to magnanimity for the enemy and leniency towards rebels. Rudyard Kipling made the paper indispensable and all but priceless to those who collect his first editions. He wrote several poems, a series of "Fables for the Staff," and some very delightful "Kopje-book Maxims," to which also Mr. Landon contributed. Dr. Conan Doyle wrote for us, and so did Lord Stanley, who came every day to visé our proofs, the while we frolicked and caused him to marvel how and when and where we did that work, in "proofs" of which we buried him arms-deep. James Barnes, another American correspondent, was a contributor, and on one day, when all the editors rode off to see a battle, he most kindly remained behind and got out the paper. Mortimer Mempes and W. B.

Wollen, the artists, General Sir Henry E. Colvile, Lionel James, and Bennet Burleigh also contributed, and we were proud to introduce to our particular public two uncommonly clever writers, Captain Cecil Lowther, of the Scots Guards, and A. B. Patterson, an Australian journalist—both humorists, one in prose and the other in verse.

One of the editors (it was the writer of this true history), fascinated by the beauty of Bloemfontein, and gulled into the belief that all the people in it were glad to see the army here, addressed a love-letter to the bowery little city as if it were a beautiful girl. He called her "Miss Bloemfontein." He asked her to let him look into the heavenly blue of her eyes, and hold her dimpled hand, and that sort of lover-like sentiment. Ods Bobs! there came to the office of *The Friend* next day a letter from a real Miss Bloemfontein—a pro-Boer girl—telling him that it was a coquette and flirt, called Miss Uitlander, who had been looking into his eyes and allowing herself to be caressed. She said that if he looked into the true Miss Bloemfontein's eyes he would find bolts of lightning in their blueness, and if he sought for her hand he would find it clenched.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### VALOUR GLORIOUSLY FRAMED

THE Kornospruit or Sanna's Post affair will always appear to me the most extraordinary and dramatic feature of the war while I was with either Lord Methuen's or Lord Roberts's armies. I spent many days in cross-examining all whom I could find who took part in it, and gathered facts sufficient to construct an account, perhaps the fullest and clearest of all that were sent home, and a fitting text for a disquisition upon valour—for this fight exemplifies the character and quality of the courage of the British soldier better than any that has taken place since the war in the Crimea.

"I have not known," I wrote, "precisely how to rate British valour. I have seen that it is the first of its kind. I have had many opportunities to judge it. It has shown itself in every engagement they have had with the Boers, sometimes too brilliantly to be entrusted to English for description, often successfully, always tellingly.

"But what does it make for, how does it count in war? Remember that the Boer has never shown a



trace of that quality, and yet he has made many a good battle, and we account him a good fighting man.

“ If we analyse the fighting qualities of the Briton and the Boer, we find that the Briton is always ready to rush upon death, while the Boer as religiously avoids risking his life more than the greatest caution leaves necessary. Shall we, then, say that valour is accompanied by the unnecessary slaughter of those who possess it? It has often seemed so. Grant this, admit that many an Englishman now lying under the surface of the veldt would have ‘lived to fight another day’ had he been less brave, what is there left to say for valour—pure, unreasoning, dashing valour? ”

I know that the men who possess it will read this with impatience. They do not admit that the value of this quality is debatable. They belong to a race which has always enjoyed and valued it, and they despise those who have missed it, just as they despise those who boast of it—for they are so certain of it among themselves that they never allude to it except in praise of an enemy. But we must speak of it in discussing this war because it was one of the two most important elements, in the earlier part of the conflict, on the British side. Those two were the bad generalship of incompetent commanders, and the extraordinary courage by which their men either veiled or glorified their generals’ mistakes.

We must discuss it as we discuss the consequences of

equipping an army with long-range magazine rifles, or with lyddite shells, or with smokeless powder. The proper rating of valour in battle is surely as well worth looking into as the worth of these other equipments. I have suggested that the Briton regards valour as a regulation accompaniment, like his body or his weapons. I think I can say how the Boer, who has never known the feeling of it, found himself regarding the quality after five months of fighting on that western side of the continent.

He is a hunter rather than a warrior. His game is to lie in hiding and kill whatever comes in front of him—and to run the moment his own skin is threatened.

At Belmont and Graspan he discovered that whereas deer either die or run away, the British ran at him. Therefore he ceased to hide behind rocks, and took to a campaign of surprises, traps, and ambushes. He dug trenches below the surface and hid in the grass, concentrating such numbers that either the first volley or his continuous volleys would hold back even the extraordinary valour which disregarded the death of many, so long as life maintained itself in a few. At Belmont and Graspan he was surprised and jolted out of his lairs by this valour, but, with his accustomed fox-like cunning, he thereafter counted upon this quality in his foes, and made it serve his deadly purpose by leading his victims into pitfalls.

I saw this long ago, and it was when I first saw it that I began to ask myself, in cold blood, what is its value in war? We are not speaking of plain courage—but of this extraordinary kind or degree of valour that the British troops display. Of course, one cannot do without courage—at least, only the Boer can, and he can do so only because he inhabits a country made to suit him—or which has made him to suit it; a country in which there is a natural fortress for every square mile. The German has a reliable, staying, dogged courage. The Frenchman has a brilliant courage at the call of a leader he trusts. The Turk was my ideal of a soldier up to last year because he unites with the German sort of courage a belief that to be killed in battle is to earn a harem in heaven, and a seat in a first-class carriage on the way. Compare any kinds of courage with the utter absence of it in the Greek, and we see by the record of the Turco-Greek contest that courage is an essential in war.

But British valour is a different thing. It often seems a rushing into, and a defiance of, certain death. It recks nothing, avoids nothing, considers nothing. It imbues an entire regiment, brigade, army—driving on commander, colonel, captain, corporal, and private all alike. It has won all round the globe. It succeeds very often. It sometimes takes the place of strategy, it discounts enormous odds against itself; at times it upsets failure at the last moment, transforming it to success.

It must, therefore, be of great value ; but in judging of that we must take into account the cost of it—and its cost in human lives is very great indeed.

These have been my thoughts for months. This has been puzzling me. I have not yet solved the question of the difference between its cost and its profits, as any merchant would insist upon doing before he would either make or deal in it. I have come to the conclusion that I would not go into a war without it, but that may be because I am Anglo-Saxon—and prejudiced. Therefore, I must leave the discussion of its actual value to others ; not to military men, of course, because they all persist in thinking it a fine possession beyond all compare or question.

The words of a military attaché, sent here by a nation which loves England none too well, will illustrate this.

“I always thought the Turk was the finest soldier in the world,” said he ; “but—leaving out the cavalry, which have not done so well—I shall always say that there is no other army to compare with the British. For courage, dash, staying power, discipline, and all that makes for success with an army there is no other like it.”

“I’ll tell you how you must consider it,” said a British officer ; “you must note what it brings in its train. You must observe how cool in danger are the men who possess it. You must observe how modestly

they bear their own share of it, and how prone they are to praise it in their comrades. And when you consider it practically—as a commercial man would—you must remember that the Boer gets along without it only because he fights on the defensive—and a defensive policy never yet won a war. If he had valour he would have done us infinite damage. And, sooner or later, when he is driven back to his last corner, he must show valour or he must lose the game.”

The material for the best exposition of this high quality which this war has provided is an account of the fight at Kornospruit—with which no engagement that has taken place can compare in richness of examples of this much-prized force.

I might well begin with Colonel Pilcher's visit to Ladybrand with thirty-five men of the 10th Hussars. There he was welcomed by the tricky Boers, and entertained with lavish protestations of friendship. He arrested the landdrost, and then heard that thousands of Boers were near by waiting to attack his little band. He gave the order to retire, and instantly the false-hearted people of the place opened fire from windows, doors, and walls—but he got off with the landdrost, and did more injury than he suffered. He was in General Broadwood's command, which was centred at Thaba N'chu. He found Broadwood aware of the massing of many thousand Boers. The considerable transport of the force (of about 2,000 men) was ordered to retire

in advance to Bloemfontein, while the combatants guarded the neck leading to the valley in which Thaba N'chu lies. This was before sunset.

Broadwood had heard that another troop of Boers was coming down from Brandfort to join the Ladybrand force, and he sent word to General Roberts, apprising him of his plight. The Field-Marshal sent out a sufficient support, but the distance from Bloemfontein gave an advantage to the Boers. In Broadwood's little army were 200 Life Guards, 200 of the 10th Hussars, under Colonel Pilcher; Alderson's Brigade of Mounted Infantry, consisting of the first regiment, the third regiment, the Burmese regiment, and two weak squadrons of Rimington's Tigers and Roberts's Horse. With part of this force Broadwood fought a small rearguard action from noon until night, holding back the Boers as he imagined. At nine o'clock at night he marched his men out of the Thaba N'chu valley and caught up with his convoy at half-past two o'clock in the morning at the waterworks across the Modder, two hours after the waggons had outspanned there.

All had passed some hills 3,000 yards behind their place of bivouac, and from one of these came shells at daybreak, awakening them. This attack changed to his front what he had considered his rear, and, as every general would do, he ordered his convoy on—that is to say behind, towards Bloemfontein. He sent Roberts's Horse with the waggons as an escort, and with these

he also despatched batteries Q and U of the Royal Horse Artillery. Quickly the animals were inspanned and started off, while the main body of the combatants faced about to get into touch with the enemy.

Then came the tragedy—the completest trap—the greatest surprise—the most dramatic coup and the cleverest bit of Boer work—in this war. The Boers were in large force behind Broadwood as well as in front. While he had retreated from Thaba N'chu a large number had doubled on him and taken up an invisible position on his road to Bloemfontein. He heard heavy firing on the convoy behind him. A ridge or slight rise prevented him from seeing its source ; but he grasped its import, and sent Captain Chester Master, of Rimington's Tigers, back to find a way out of what he knew to be a trap into which his force had fallen.

Now, let us follow the convoy. It had escaped the early morning shell fire against the troops. The animals were quickly inspanned, and the long line of waggons was trekking over a nearly flat treeless prairie with the usual view, on all sides, of a deadly monotonous veldt. Ahead was a slight rise like a soft swell of the sea. You would not have noticed it, though it served to hide from Broadwood what was about to happen beyond it. The waggons came first to a little spruit or nearly dry stream-bed, and the place they had to choose for a crossing brought them into the shell fire. The feet of the hundreds of animals churned up the soft bottom



into a mire, and seven waggons stuck there. Captain Atcherley, of the A.S.C., summoned help of about forty men of Roberts's Horse, who stayed until it was useless to stay longer, dismounted, with their arms stacked, tugging at the waggons in a vain endeavour to shift them. Every man of these was a hero, for none of their lives was worth a pin. They took their inspiration from the exclamations of one of their officers, who kept on shouting, "Do not leave a pennyworth to the d——d Boers."

In the meantime the rest of the long train had gone on, over this slight rise beyond the first or little spruit to the Kornespruit, the larger of the two spruits, and the place of extraordinary disaster. Here were hidden Boer riflemen in four tiers commanding the spruit and the veldt so completely that they could comb them both with shot. The first tier was on the farther bank of the spruit. The second, third, and fourth tiers were hidden behind the stone walls of a double cattle kraal built tiltingly on the slope beyond the spruit. The leading waggon in the long convoy was Captain Atcherley's Scotch cart. It went safely down the spruit and nearly across the drift. Several large buck waggons followed it.

They had no reason to suspect the truth, which was that seven hundred Boers were almost close enough to breathe in their faces. Out from their shelter came a few who, like Piccadilly policemen handling a blockade,

advanced, holding up their hands and saying, " Stop ! you are surrounded. You can do nothing. Drive there " ; or they said, " Drive over there " ; or " There—go on until we tell you to stop." The negro drivers did as they were told. Such soldiers as were on the carts had thrown their rifles behind them—as they generally do—and these they gave up when ordered to.

There is always a succession of stoppages when a convoy is crossing a drift. It must be so, because the pace slows in ascending the further side. Thus, with a number of delays, the waggons came thumping, jouncing, and bumping down into the little ravine, and the Boers rode up and disclosed themselves in little companies, crying out that it was " all up—no use fighting," and demanding their rifles of the soldiers on the waggons.

In the meantime Roberts's Horse were riding up to take their place in the line, when they were met by a conductor of the A.S.C., who had turned in the spruit and ridden back without being stopped or fired at. " For Heaven's sake ! " he shouted, " go back. There are Boers there." The answer he got was, " Don't be a fool," and they advanced. Immediately a native driver came back at full speed, shouting : " The Boers are here ! Boers ! Boers ! " Not a shot had yet been fired.

This was taking place on the right of the convoy. On the left the two batteries came along, and, finding a

crush, went around, outside the waggons, to see what was going on ahead. In the spruit a cook of the Household Cavalry had dashed his rifle at the pit of a Boer's stomach, but still no shot was fired. U Battery leading the way down into the spruit, alongside the convoy, reached the scene just as the Boers rose in great numbers, crying out in good English, "Give up ! We've got you covered," and the like.

And now came the cloudburst of shot.

A serjeant-major of the Army Service Corps provoked it. He gave up his rifle on demand, but when he was handing over his revolver he clapped it to the head of his Boer captor and shot him dead. Then the Boers loosed all their rifles with a fire that cannot be described—a blasting, terrible fire—one so thick that those who stood against it say they cannot understand how any man got away. The Mauser bullets flew like ropes of lead from near at hand upon those in the spruit, and just as thickly across the veldt, where many of the troops and the main body of the convoy were.

The panic which followed was like a bit of Bedlam. It was mainly a stampede of the horses and mules which could not be restrained. Those who were well back on the veldt saw more riderless horses than they had ever seen in battle before. They saw a gun of U Battery without a man near it being swung right and left along the veldt, and buck waggons, cavalry,

a mounted infantry horse, limbers, and everything imaginable beside, in front of and behind it. Men too were dropping in their tracks, and falling from their saddles, while in the foreground stood Q Battery, all but deserted by its men.

The Boers were shooting across the British in the spruit and killing each other. They shot a refugee mother and baby on one of the carts. It seemed as if nothing could escape their bullets. They endeavoured to be just, and ordered to one side the men of U Battery, who had been obliged to surrender. If ever the human eye and ear anticipated the horrors of hell it was there and then. Two Tommies hiding under a waggon were joined by a Boer. They dragged him between them, and pommelled him senseless. A gunner, surrounded in the spruit, drew his sword and cut one Boer down—then he wounded another, and then he was shot. The serjeant-major of U Battery, who had been parleying with the Boers when the firing began, cantered out of the spruit, and joined the other battery in safety.

Major Phipps-Hornby and his men, of Q Battery assembled on the rise in the face of the awful fire, and then went back still facing the fire, to the edge of the spruit, and secured their guns. They were able to get four of them. These and the one gun of U Battery, which escaped from the spruit, made up a battery of five guns. These were actually trained on

the Boers, and fired for a long time at 1,000 yards—a distance at which the Boer rifles were as effective as if they were fired at arm's length. Gunners and officers dropped, but those who were not hit kept on firing. The tin houses were on a rise of ground. Behind this rise was a drift across the small or first spruit. Toward this drift raced all the panic-stricken horses, and it was here that the men began to control the animals, and discipline was brought with a violent effort out of chaos. All over the veldt was the mad disorder of a stampeding convoy and the steeds of soldiers. The confusion in the drift was awful. Horses and waggons ran other horses and waggons down. But at last order came out of it all.

In the meantime we have left part of the convoy and all of Roberts's Horse in the heart of the drenching rain of bullets. Major Dawson, commanding the Horse, heard the order to surrender, and replied, simply, "Files about. Gallop!" This is also the time when persistent rumour says that the men who had surrendered in the spruit were shot by the Boers. I believe this is wholly false. As I have said, the prisoners were told to stand aside, and those who were shot suffered as everybody did—even many of the Boers themselves—from a cross fire in great part coming from an unfinished railway embankment on the Boer right.

It was then that General Broadwood came over the

ridge with all his command to begin as gallant a fight as is recorded in any annals. Shelled from behind and raked by rifle-fire in front, on the right, and on the right rear, at 1,000 yards, with men and horses falling, with Boers shooting Boers, with everybody else in the direst, maddest confusion, this little British force remained under perfect discipline defending itself in the open against the murderous fire of a hidden three to one. Under these circumstances, Broadwood carried out as brilliant a retirement as human brain and nerve could devise and execute. There is not a man who was with Broadwood on that day who is not willing to follow him anywhere—even to the Inferno, if the Boers do not give up when they are driven there.

The four guns which escaped the worst fate in the first surprise were called on to cover the retirement of the mounted men, and to try to recover the two they were obliged to abandon. The men of the battery were only a few tatters of the original body—a skeleton, a dismembered, crippled thing. But what men were left sat bolt upright through the tempest of lead, rigid, soldierly, without a sign of what they had experienced, or of what they knew lay before them. They turned, faced the position of their disaster, and opened fire against five Boer long-range guns and two pompoms, whose missiles seemed to fall in the middle of their little force nearly the whole time. At last Colonel Alderson's Mounted Infantry Regiment was able to

retire and, these being the last, the guns also retired. Disdaining to gallop, or even to trot, they walked their horses away under that infernal downpour of shells and raking of Mauser bullets.

The Burmese Mounted Infantry, Major Cruikshank in command, formed up at the front edge of the rise, and gave the Boers shot in streams like molten lead. The New Zealand Mounted Rifles did as well in covering the first line of the retiring force. Dismounting and putting their mounts under cover, they blazed away at the Boers—standing out in the open and in the worst of the fire—as if they were defying the death that kept searching the whole veldt with its snaky fingers.

When General Broadwood learned the facts he felt, as did every other soldier there, that all were trapped, and that there might be no way out. To surrender occurred to no man in that great band of heroes. To find a way out and, failing that to die, was the single idea common to all. Broadwood came into the vortex of the battle and stampede and brought his command to order, and then to safety. He sent the cavalry and some mounted infantry across the Kornospruit to the right of the Boer position, to flank and enfilade them. He arranged for the covering of his retirement with guns and riflemen—and he got his force away quickly, and with the least loss of life that was possible in a situation which seemed to offer escape to no one. He



deserves the thanks and praises of his countrymen for the coolness, the intrepidity, and the skill with which he thus saved five-sixths of his force. Had Colvile's large force, which was close at hand, come to his relief—even had he known that Bosmankop, lying in the line of his retirement, was in British hands, he would have got back his seven guns.

For a week I collected instances of valour on the part of humbler individuals in this fight. At the end I was overwhelmed by their number.

To mention merely the notable cases would be to take up a page of a daily newspaper. It would be to gazette a quarter of the participants in the dramatic adventure. There's the daring of Major Hornby, of Q Battery; the reckless bravery of Major Taylor and of Sergeant-Major Martin of the U Battery; the magnificent coolness of Major Cruikshank, in rounding up his Burmese troopers; the daring of the commander of the New Zealanders; the reckless bravery of the sergeant-major of U Battery; the splendid bearing of Colonel Pilcher, fresh from death's jaws at Ladybrand; the nerve of the major, captain, and subaltern of Roberts's Horse, who stopped twenty minutes under shell-fire to help out the stranded waggons; the self-effacement of Captain Foster, A.S.C., who went across the bullet-searched veldt, back to the waterworks, to burn the forage that was left there, so that the Boers should not have it; of Captain Vignolles, of Roberts's Horse, and

of his men, who refused to go on when his charger was shot under him ; of Trooper Murphy and Sergeant Collins, of that same command who seemed made of solid pluck in the thick of danger ; of Trooper Todd, of Roberts's Horse, who went back to the spruit to search for a wounded comrade, and searched far and wide, while the Boers did their best to kill him ; of Captain St. Leger, of the 18th Royal Irish (M.I.), and his corporal, Hall, and a bugler, all of whom forgot themselves while saving others. But there are entire commands that are as deserving of mention—and scores of individuals as well, who must forgive me for leaving them out.

A man on the field at the time told me that it was wonderful to note how each man who was asked what he knew was sure to tell of the heroism of some other man. I find it so to-day. If I ask officer or soldier for his story, he replies that what he did was nothing, but that I ought to know what some one else did. But to the "men in England now abed," who know not the thrill and quiver of the fighting spirit—if many such there be—the still more wondrous thing is this : that there is not a man who came out of that trap alive who did not long to get at the Boers again and quickly.

A Boer, speaking after the fight, said to my very able comrade, H. A. Giognne : "The whole force of Boers was touched with admiration of the splendid be-

haviour of your troops. We looked upon that force of Broadwood's as finished, and I confess, if it had been a Boer force, it would have given up its arms."

This, then, is British valour. Is the reader able to judge by these examples of it what its commercial value is, what it weighs in the scales against what it costs? In this case it saved a little army because practically every man in that army possessed it. In other cases it has lost nearly as heavily.

Can any one, then, strike the balance?

## CHAPTER XIX

### “FAIR WOMEN AND BRAVE MEN”

DURING a little lull, on April 6th, while nothing was going on immediately around us, I sent home a letter dealing with our infrequent and faint acquaintanceship with the gentler sex while we had been in the war.

There had been breaks in the monotony of exposure and hardship now and then during this time. We war correspondents enjoyed them more (and more of them) than the soldiers, but I hope it is not immodest to say that we tried to share those crumbs to comfort with our friends among the officers.

We did not fully realise it at the time, but the few weeks we spent on “the Island” in the Modder made a precious season. We hired a little mud-made hotel among the dwarf mimosas and there we slept in actual beds, and broke open our boxes of provisions to be cooked in a real kitchen, and served on a genuine dining-table, with crockery and glasses and knives, forks, and spoons. The walls and roof of the dining-room were peppered with bullet holes, and a shell had torn through one side and smashed one door, as if it had been run into by a railway engine.

Ah, dear friends at home (I wrote), if you could know how palatial all this seemed—not only to us, but to the noble lords and sons of dukes who came as our guests! How we enjoyed those iron cots, though the bedding took on a khaki-coloured blush for never being changed! If you could understand how proud we were of sleeping within four walls, in rooms whose floor was only a sort of flour of crumbling cow-dung and dirt! If you could have heard how enthusiastically even generals expressed their envy of us—then you would begin to know how hard and rough and dirty a time your country’s defenders have been having.

You would appreciate it better if you could have sat with us on our “real chairs” and looked over the river at Methuen’s army. It was for ever ‘whelmed by “dust devils” that licked up the floury surface of the hot, bare earth and blew it through the tents, through every khaki uniform, into the lungs and stomach, and the food and drink of every man.

There was a piano in the tin-roofed dining-room—at least it had the outward looks and a few of the inward sounds of a piano. This proved magnet enough for those in whose hearts music dwelt, and they came to it from as far as Klokfontein and Maaghersfontein. When we had enjoyed a good tinned dinner, with fresh onions to glorify it, and then found one among us who could hammer a tune out of the piano, how

fortunate and happy we felt! Indeed, nothing seemed lacking—except the presence of woman.

He whose visits we most enjoyed was Captain Kenneth Macdonald, A.S.C., who seemed to us to sing like an angel—and to be almost as good as one in other ways. General Pole-Carew used to try to outstay the moon with us, sometimes, when "Mac" was loosing song-birds from his throat, this dashing and debonair general came and took the other half of our hotel with his staff. We grew to be his devotees—as all of the Guards Brigade are—so alert and keen a soldier is he, so neat and smart at all times, and so unceasingly good at heart. He is one of those small packages into which Mars puts his best lieutenants.

Nothing seemed lacking except the presence of woman. And the day was to come when we were to see a woman—after months of wondering whether they really were as we remembered them—or whether the entire sex was not a dream, a thing only to be met with in fairy books. To be sure, we saw many Kaffir women, built far out with rounding additions in many places, like modern battleships. But they could not remind us of the ladies we used to know—was it years ago?—in London.

One day we were having "sports" on the camp ground of our 13,000 men. Crowds of us—dusty, dirty, stained things in khaki—were crowded on both sides of the race track, and round the extremely dirty

person who was giving us a tight rope show. Our noses were peeled, our cheeks were hung with skin-tatters like the bark of a gum tree, our lips were seamed with cracks. Great Scott! how disreputable we looked—and how you would have cheered us if we had marched past you on the Embankment!

All of a sudden a Cape cart was driven up, and out stepped an elderly man and a young lady. She was all in white, except for her blue blouse and black boots, and the few small flowers in her white straw hat. She was seventeen or eighteen—a country girl from Rosemead, near by—but of the very best type, slender and lithe as a fawn. She had light-brown hair, but the face of a pure blonde, with cheeks like “two handfuls of white cherries.” Her eyes were precisely what you would have had them—light blue, large, a little timid, and a little mischievous. There are thousands of us who could describe every inch of what we saw of her; though, after she appeared, we could not take any interest in the sports.

The man on the wire might have fallen off and I should not have known it. I believe Captain Wright did win the best race, gallantly, but we did not see it. If I am not mistaken the Boers tossed a few shells into our lines; but what we saw was a girl’s dimpled little hands, a girl’s fairy eyes, a maiden’s rosy lips, a pair of ridiculous little Cinderella boots that we could put in one of our pockets. Thirteen thousand of us



looked at her, sidewise, discreetly—just as one looks at a sweet-faced young nun. Then she went away and we went on eating sanded food, or marching and fighting without food, sleeping on the veldt in cold rains, walking into gusts of bullets, dying, being wounded, taking enteric, baking and caking in the sun and dust. But through it all we knew that it is no dream that women did exist—for we had seen one.

A few of us have since been in Kimberley, and have seen ladies in the streets, have seen cosy little homes from which the tinkling of pianos has sounded, and have observed here and there a lady at a window, or in a garden among the flowers. That does not seem much to tell about, does it? And yet we do tell of it, and think of it, and prize it very highly. Still more of us were at Bloemfontein, where there were girls behind the counters in the shops, and our Tommies bunched up together wherever there was a "she," and a great deal of talk went to and fro while they spent their little wages on whatever such a girl might have to sell.

Why, the refinements and delicacy, the gentleness, the beauty, and the other charms which women now seem to us to monopolise in little widely-distant corners of South Africa, have come to be more valued by us than you could easily believe. Let me set down a proof of this. There lives in a certain town a certain girl—and the girl and the town shall be nameless.

The girl stands behind the counter, is seventeen, and is rather free and merry, being good as gold as well. Envious women might call her flirtatious, and, if we men were at home, some of us might call her kittenish. The first of the army to enter the town made friends with her, and presently invited her to gather some girl friends and come into the country for a picnic. Two waggons were employed, and three sedate men, with more grey than they like in their hair, were the hosts. The chief among the girls invited a miss of twelve and a miss of sixteen, and the latter brought along her nine-year-old sister. All drove into the country to the home of the twelve-year-old girl, where out on the veldt the servants prepared the feast. There was roast fowl, Oxford sausage, preserved apricots, bread and butter, a plenty of grapes and champagne, soda and ginger beer. Out from the farmhouse rolled three chubby boys, whose years added together might have summed up a total of fifteen.

They were joyfully welcomed, and crammed with food. The girls giggled and talked to each other in Dutch, then, growing much more at ease, began to propound childish riddles and conundrums. The three little urchins stuffed themselves as geese are stuffed for the fattening of their livers. Presently out came the six or seven dogs of the family, bent on getting their own good time. And then the father of Miss Twelve and two strapping farmer boys slouched out

and flung themselves down beside the others, to look on and listen. The gentlemen's servants hung about the outer edge of the little bunch of people on the grass, eagerly attending to the simple prattle of the girls.

It does seem a strange situation—the three polished men of the world, to whom the world is already a trifle stale ; the giggling, rustic maidens who realised that their position was peculiar, yet could not say why ; the purely animal dogs and little boys—all stomachs and joy—and the masculine farmer folk looking on as we of the big world sit in a theatre and look on at the play. But as the three soiled campaigners saw the situation it was scented by the aroma of home, illumined by miniature suggestions of the women they loved—and it was a change from battle and hardship to calm and rest, and the gentler emotions. When it was a thing of the past some men of the army geyed them, and some asked if it had not been a bore. To all the three men answered: "It was the best time we have had in Africa."

"The farmer's wife failed to grasp it," said one. "'Going to picnic?' she asked. 'Why, you have done nothing but picnic all the way up from the Colony. I'd have thought you had picnic enough.'"

And afterwards, while I was in Bloemfontein, it was my good fortune twice to enjoy deeper and truer reminders of the place the now distant sex once occupied

for us all. I have had tea at an English home, where the ladies came in gloved and with their choicest manners; where a young hostess presided, and her little children shrank, wide-eyed in a corner staring at our stained khaki. And where we trod about with cups of tea and feints at gallantry in boots that made the delicate furniture tremble and the fine china shiver. And I have spent an evening in a drawing-room with several ladies, in all the dainty charm of evening dress, listening to their ballads, and their rich, soft speech; learning all over again, like a forgotten lesson of childhood, the sweeter, purer, gentler side of life.

Do not laugh. Follow an army five months on the veldt, and then you will know what it is to see a lady.

I should be recreant to every principle I respect if I did not here make especial mention, by name, of one lady to whom I owe a personal debt, and the whole British race owes a national one. I refer to Miss Maud Young, the matron of the Volks Hospital at Bloemfontein. Keep her name in your memory, readers all, for though she would scorn the idea that she had done the least thing beyond what she was bound to do in the pursuit of her calling, you shall see that she deserves high credit.

This hospital was a Boer Government institution, and she and less than half a dozen young women of English blood and Afrikaner birth formed the staff under Dr. Kellner, latterly also a mayor of the capital.

When the war broke out the matron and nurses naturally resolved to leave their places and go to their homes rather than remain with the foes of their country. But Dr. Kellner quieted them by saying, "I cannot see what difference it makes whether you have to nurse Boers or not. This is the first time I have ever heard politics introduced in connection with hospital work. Besides, if you stay, you will have plenty of British to look after."

So they all remained at their posts, and the doctor's words came true, for many hundreds of officers and soldiers of the British army passed under their care. Before any British came, however, the Boers dragooned Miss Young and some of her helpers into their war service, taking them to their battlefields, at one of which these young women were left to sort the wounded from among the dead out of the ambulances in which all had been piled together.

The fair young matron lived and worked in the hope of caring for her own countrymen, and at last British wounded began to arrive. When Lord Roberts's army approached Bloemfontein a number of English were in the hospital beds. The Boers meant to take them to Pretoria, but Miss Young was more firmly resolved that they should remain, and be delivered over to the British with the conquered capital. Day after day such inquiries as "Can the British wounded be sent on at once?" were received at the hospital, and Miss

Young replied each time that her charges were in no condition to be moved. At last, on the day before the capital was seized and occupied by the British troops, the Boer officials came to the matron and said, "A train is waiting for your British sick, and we have come for them. There must not be another hour's delay." To this the lion-willed, lamb-hearted woman replied, "Come and see them for yourselves, and move them if you wish to kill them all before they reach Pretoria."

The Boers went through the wards and lo! every British patient had his head bandaged and displayed the feebleness of one at death's door. "Why!" the Boers exclaimed, "are they all shot in the head?" Miss Young replied, "You can see for yourselves." By this ruse—for not a man among them was either shot in the head or unfitted for removal—all were saved for the care of their comrades.

After that the Volks Hospital filled up with British wounded and sick—hundreds of them—generals, colonels, majors, and men of every rank. Among them all moved these hearty, kindly, altogether lovable young women, in spotless white, with never-failing tenderness and never-flagging zeal. To be sent there was to get a mortgage on new life. Miss Young once said to me, "We should consider it a lasting disgrace if an enteric patient died in our charge." After that a few—either two or seven, I am not certain which—did die in the hospital—out of all the hundreds who came

—but it was because they were sent there in such extremity of illness that no human skill or knowledge could save them. This was so unjust that Dr. Kellner felt obliged to protest, and the practice was stopped before the results affected the high record of the hospital—the highest of any institution of the sort, civil or military, of which I have heard in South Africa.

It will not be thought extravagant if I urge that a medal, or some material token of recognition of her services, be awarded to Miss Young ; and what she has earned is deserved also by Dr. Kellner—a German who buried race feeling if he ever possessed any ; a salaried Boer official who put humanity high above all other duties and considerations. To find a faithful, reliable friend in Boerdom was wonderful—and in both republics no man was found to whom the British owe so much as they owe to Dr. Kellner.



## CHAPTER XX

### HOW TO DEAL WITH THE ENEMY

How to deal with the enemy in the Freed State, after it was conquered, was a very delicate and difficult problem. The British policy had been from the outset one of leniency and magnanimity, and the bearing of all men in authority, from Sir Alfred Milner and Lord Roberts down, had been that of a loving and trustful parent toward an erring child. It was not my idea of how war should be conducted. It is not my belief now that this policy could have any more pronounced effect than that of prolonging hostilities, even if exercised upon a highly civilised and honourable enemy.

In the case of the Boers, whose moral sight is twisted, and whose moral sense departed at a time which no historian can fix, it seemed to me peculiarly inappropriate and defective. I never once saw proof that the Boers set any other value upon British tolerance of their very dubious methods, than that upon which they based the liberty and audacity to continue their mispractices, with the certainty that the stern consequences they merited would not be meted out to them. "The

British are earning a reward in heaven," I used to think—and still maintain.

An axiom with the Boers is, "If you insist that I shall tell the truth, then I must lie," so little do they value veracity. As for common honesty we have seen that they rank "slimness," or the ability to deceive and trick a neighbour, as first among human virtues. "Fear God, honour your parents, and cheat the English," is the lesson every Boer lad is taught at his mother's knee. To show magnanimity and mildness to such a people was only to convince them that one was either a fool or a very cunning plotter arranging a trap which was to catch and torture them later on. In the whole course of the war they thought and called the British fools. Their impudent abuse of Lord Roberts's proclamation, calling them to lay down their arms, is but the most extraordinary of ten thousand proofs of what they thought of an honest and earnest effort to convince them that, when all should come under the British standard, their conquerors would not be found to be revengeful, unforgiving, or unkind.

We did not all share the official opinion of the way to deal with a faintly civilised foe. I was by no means alone in the belief that General Sherman was right in the reply he made to a deputation of lady friends in Georgia who asked him if it could be possible that he meant to burn his way to the sea—even to burn the fair city of Atlanta. Said he: "I mean to make war

as horrible as I can. This is your war, not ours. You wanted and would have it. At its best it is an awful thing, and the one way to shorten it, the surest way to save life and lessen damage, is to make it as horrible as we can."

There were such generals in the army in South Africa; distinguished men whom all Britain admires. "The way to treat the Boers is to lay them out cold in rows," one used to say. And the other remarked at times: "This is a namby-pamby war. There is not enough blood about it."

The "shuddery tales" we often heard at the front about how Boers treated their brother Boers if they made peace with Britain are not yet proven. I have heard some so circumstantially set forth that I have believed them—but all were of happenings within the enemy's lines, and we could not be sure.

That is why the tales were not cabled home. Before one might cable anything it had to be, in a way, the common talk of the camp, repeated by everybody, and denied by no one. With a just censor such as Lord Stanley no harm came of that rule, which protected the public at home and the army in the field. There was, however, at least one censor who used to say, "You tell me you know this—you actually saw it. That may be, but I did not see it, and therefore I cannot allow it to go."

The first thing of the kind we heard was that a man

had come into Bloemfontein to report to the authorities that five Boers had entered his brother's house, and, after learning that it was true that his brother had signed the peace agreement, had shot him dead. After this we heard several reports that the unreconciled Boers were commandeering the horses, cattle, and forage of all who had surrendered Mausers and signed the peace agreement; also that when the seceders were caught on their ranches they were sent to Pretoria as prisoners.

Days went on, and a printer in the office of *The Friend* told me that news had come to the effect that a friend of his, a shopkeeper in or near Thaba 'Nchu, had been shot for this offence, and that the body of another seceder from the Boer ranks had been hung to a tree with a placard on his breast announcing, "This is how we will treat all who make peace with the British."

Not until the fighting is thoroughly and completely ended shall we know precisely what the Boers have been doing with those who yielded up their arms at the first call. Those who did this certainly deserve commiseration. They were tired of the war, they believed themselves safe in surrendering their arms, and they deserved a degree of protection which the British were not able to give them.

Away back in the old days (that seem like years ago) at Modder River, I found that General Pole-Carew did not approve of the extreme degree of magnanimity

and leniency then being shown to the Boers. Englishmen are too straightforward to be able to comprehend the depths of treachery and trickery to which the Boers descend without conscious effort; but General Pole-Carew knew the Boer character by hard study of it.

We all felt that if he came to an important command they would not fool him as they were then fooling nearly every one else. When the British asked the southern Freed Staters to deliver up their arms they showered upon the ground before the troops the most grotesque collection of old Martini-Henrys, fowling-pieces, elephant rifles, and other weapons handed down by their fathers and grandfathers. They kept their Mausers, and went out on commando against the British as soon as their backs were turned.

By and by the very shuddery tales to which I have referred began to reach us about the fate of the few who had honestly surrendered their genuine fighting arms, and were trying to keep their promise not to war any longer.

It was then that I cabled home that I thought we would thereafter reveal a different and a sterner temper towards the enemy. It was also at that time that Pole-Carew won his promotion. It is fitting that he should have proved the first to treat the Boer with rigid justice, strict yet untinged with anger. Wherever he went on his first expedition south and east of Bloemfontein, he demanded the arms of the "farmers" he

found on their ranches, and refused to accept any rifles except Mausers, accompanied by a certain amount of ammunition.

When he found no man on a ranche he demanded proof that the owner was not away fighting in the war, and wherever this could not be given, he seized all the horses on the place. Very truly has it been said that this mode of dealing with the Boers of a large section counts against the enemy more than a great British victory. Had the British taken all the horses in the southern part of the Freed State as soon as they crossed it, many small battles and the deaths of hundreds of their men would have been prevented.

The Guards were all immensely gratified by General Pole-Carew's advancement to the rank of Lieutenant-General, and this I know to be also true of all in the Ninth Brigade, which he commanded under Lord Methuen.

Pole-Carew is the neatest, most scrupulously dressed of all the generals—the nearest to a dandy of the lot; the only general who never goes out without gloves; and I have an idea that Lord Roberts, with whom General Pole-Carew spent seven years of service, was just such another *beau sabreur* in his youth. But under, over, and behind everything else are the soldierly qualities of the new lieutenant-general.

Since this war began he has ceaselessly worked at the problems before the army. So long as daylight

has lasted he has studied each new position it has taken, and the hours after daylight he has spent in seeking information about the enemy, the neighbouring country, and all the rest. There are few men who have so thoroughly posted themselves upon each battle, skirmish, and reconnaissance, and few who know so well as he the lessons to be drawn from those movements that have failed and those that have succeeded.

I know no keener, dyed-in-the-wool soldier than he. I believe that since the war began nothing except the war and soldiering have interested him an hour. In stature he is another "Bobs"—a little man—but he carries himself so proudly that you never think of his stature.



## CHAPTER XXI

### BOERS AS FELLOW-TOWNSMEN

THE most interesting thing about our stay in Bloemfontein was the fact that we were among the Boers.

We entered a shop, and the tailor or chemist, or whatever he might be, told us that he fought us in all Methuen's battles. We called at a town dwelling or a country cottage and found that the man of the establishment had just given up his rifle to the British and come back to his home and family. We entered into conversation with a man in the street and suddenly discovered that he was telling us just the things we did not know about some fight of which we had thought we knew rather too much.

The few sore-headed and over-noisy men who were disposed to keep the trouble going (they were mainly Germans) had either run away or been sent to Cape-town, and we were all dwelling together as brothers in amity—except those who used to slip out at night and snipe the outposts, or betray what the British were doing to their former comrades.

It took a little time and some severity to bring even

this tenor of concord. A few arrests, a few fleings, a few gentle hints to leave, and it was done. Some women, mostly Germans again, were understood to be tuning treason to their own voices. I knew of one who crept out of doors when she was obliged to go, but shuddered at the sight of the hated British, and told them so—but they were only fighting men with Mausers.

All has proven just what was to have been expected, and yet we could not help being a little surprised. We never could become quite used to seeing loose-bodied, big-hatted Boers flopping up and down in their saddles, in twos and threes, in the streets—and neither shooting at us nor being shot at. Personally, I admit that I could not get used to being with them and having them tell me about their people and doings in the war—they are so “slim,” so bent on saying whatever they think you want them to say, so generally and so deeply unprincipled.

I met one of English stock, who was therefore a bit more believable. I only say “a bit more believable” because the trail of the black man is over all Africa, and wherever the whites live beside the blacks they are more or less corrupted and demoralised. This Uitlander said that he had been in Schumann’s commando down at Rensburg. This was a most peculiar commando, he said, and was looked upon by all the Boers as of very little use or respectability,

because it was all made up of English, Irish, Scotch, and American men who had no dislike for the English, and no intention to kill any if they could help it. He said his comrades were all very like himself, men with farms and houses, wives and children, and were burghers years before the war.

In order to save their property, and protect their families from insult, they took up arms when they were obliged to do so. He told me that only about 1,700 Transvaal Boers had been fighting in the Free State (the British captured nearly 4,000), that there were not above twenty or thirty foreign mercenaries in the Free State forces—which is very likely to be true—and that there were not more than 1,000 mercenaries in the Transvaal army. He thought that, all told, there were about 50,000 Boers in the field at the outbreak of the war. He called the mercenaries “auxiliaries,” and when I asked him why he did so he said it was because they were not paid, and therefore could not be called mercenaries.

Each burgher, he said, had been obliged to provide himself with a horse, a Mauser, thirty cartridges, and eight days' food, and to be ready to join a commando at a moment's notice. They paid very little for the Mauser and cartridges—presumably the price the Government itself paid for the weapons. The eight days' rations were needed for the journey to the commando, and for the men's use until the commando

was established and providing itself with food. Rifles, ammunition, and eight days' food were given to the foreigners, but nobody had any pay.

"We never wanted anything in the way of proper food," said he. "We were always much better off than you were."

I found myself in the middle of a family circle of Boers on another day, and got from them a great deal of misinformation and the usual half per cent. of truth.

The eldest daughter said that there were 400 mercenaries in the Transvaal force, and her father said there were 4,000. However, there were some things upon which they did not differ. One was that no matter what disagreement there had been upon the question whether or not the Free State ought to have gone into this war, it would have been impossible to keep the young men out of it; their Boer blood was on fire, and they insisted upon fighting. My hosts did not, any of them, praise President Steyn—whom they admitted to possess a weak and colourless character—but they insisted that he was in only a very slight degree responsible for the action of his State. They said that their President had not the power of a policeman, and that in this case he simply obeyed the majority.

This Boer family also agreed that Albrecht was the only foreigner who was listened to or obeyed by the Boers, except, perhaps, the Frenchman who came out

to teach them how to handle the Creusot guns. Albrecht had been a burgher so long, and was so brave, that he obtained great power and influence. As an example of his bravery it was said that at Maaghersfontein, when our artillery was frightening the Boers terribly, Albrecht stood up and said : " Why should I be afraid ? There is plenty of room for the shells to pass on both sides of me." He said this in a jargon-language, as he said everything else, for he never learned Taal, and sprinkled what he knew of it all over with German.

I wonder whether I have ever written, in my notes of the Boers, how it is said that they compute their losses in battle ?

Every one in England knows, of course, that eight was the largest number of killed which they have ever reported, that " two killed " was the usual admission, and that their reports of each battle usually ended with the sentence : " The English dead covered the ground," or " Thousands of English and Gourkhas were seen dead on the field as we retired to take up a better position." The explanation of a part of this perverse mistreatment of facts was this : when a battle was closing the Boer commandant began to look the dead over.

" Who is this ? " he asked, as he came to a body.

" That is a Swede."

" Bury him," he ordered.

Stopping by a second body he asked, "Whose body is that?" He was told that it was another Swede—or a Hollander—or a Frenchman. "Bury him," he said.

Over a third body he was told that the remains were those of a Johannesburg miner. "Bury him," was his reply.

When he reached the next corpse he inquired whose it was, and was informed that it was the body of young Piet Vanderbile.

"One killed," he remarked, making a note with his pencil on a piece of paper. "Tell his people in the commando where they can find his body to take it away."

This was done ; and, as I have said, to die in battle among the Boers was almost like dying at home. Each man had fighting beside and around him his father, uncles, or brothers, or cousins, and these looked after him as decently as they could—even riding off to the dead man's home with his body if it was possible.

It appears that what we used to hear about the independence of each private soldier in a commando was very true. The Boers who were around us in Bloemfontein all said that there was no discipline, as we understand the term, in their ranks. A man chose his own place in the Boer position in battle. He fought or not, as he pleased. He even left his commando and went home when he was tired of the war, or when he funk'd under fire. Plenty of Boers returned to their

homes, but it is admitted that the guying they got from their neighbours was scarcely more endurable than the fear they felt in battle.

When the news of Piet Joubert's death reached us in Bloemfontein I was reminded of the account that Surgeon-Major Lindley, of Rimington's Corps of Guides, gave of the old general's visit to New York a dozen years ago. The two met there. The descendants of Hollanders in New York were making a great and festive to-do over the simple and rough old man, not in the least knowing that the Boers are of such mixed blood as to have very little claim upon kinship with either the Hollanders or their Knickerbocker descendants. Dr. Lindley took Joubert to see a grammar school—Tom Hunter's old school in Thirteenth Street, I believe.

The doctor introduced Joubert as a famous General of the Washington or Simon Bolivar sort, but Joubert would have no praise for any skill he did not possess.

"Heaven won my battles," said he; "and I was only the humble instrument." That was, of course, the customary Boer cant, and was not believed in for a moment even by the man who uttered it. But what he next said was sincere.

"When I look down upon these hundreds of young faces," he continued, "and know that you are all here to get education, and when I think that the tiniest little child before me knows a great deal more than I



do, I am more sad than ever to have missed a good schooling, and to be forced to go through life a stupid, ignorant old man. If I could only make you know how bitterly I regret the loss of education I am sure that not one of you would ever throw away an hour of the time you have in which to study."

## CHAPTER XXII

### PLANS FOR THE GREAT ADVANCE

IN addition to the work of arranging the new government of the Free State, and bringing up thousands of horses and mules, and car-loads of provisions, Lord Roberts was planning and preparing to execute the grand raking movement by which five armies were simultaneously to sweep across the new state and meet at Pretoria in the Transvaal. These armies were being strengthened, perfected, and moved to their bases, while small forces ranged hither and thither to circulate the Field-Marshal's call to the burghers to lay down their arms, and to sign an agreement to keep the peace.

Judging the Boer standard of honour by his own, and estimating their good sense at an equally high valuation, he reposed more confidence in what followed than he ever felt inclined to vouchsafe to the Boer afterwards. This was because the greater number of the weapons they at first delivered up were useless, old-fashioned guns—heirlooms and curios—and their promises not to fight any longer were violated as promptly as was possible.

General Clements's army was one of those that were drawn to the capital in readiness for the sweeping of the country with Lord Roberts's many brooms. I am convinced that Clements's march from Norvals Pont to Bloemfontein deserves more recognition than has been given to it. It is true there was no opposition, but this was due to the general's masterly handling of the column. The advance on Philippolis was made without incident, but after this town had been left behind small commandoes were reported all over the country. These, expecting Clements's force to keep on the main road, hovered round its left flank, and its flying columns, picked men on picked horses, advancing with great rapidity, took them by complete surprise. They had no time to consider what they should do before the British were upon them, with the result that about 2,000 altogether laid down their arms and returned to their different occupations—or pretended to do so.

With the object of making a demonstration, the force was divided into three columns, covering an enormous tract of country, striking dismay into the hearts of the most disaffected, and impressing many with the uselessness of continuing the struggle.

Boer-like, the farmers met the troops with the utmost cordiality, and entertained them with great hospitality. On every farm the men had returned, and were busy ploughing. All expressed their relief at

getting rid of their arms, and showed no reluctance to do so.

This was on our way to Koffyfontein where Clements's force passed through a grand cattle country, finding the grass luxuriant, the cattle fat, the farm-houses comfortable, and the farmers prosperous. But afterwards the scene changed, and from Emmaus, through Petrusburg, and to within thirty miles of Bloemfontein, the country was poverty-stricken, with no dams for the storing of water, the little patches of garden being watered from wells. The farmers—ignorant, uncouth men of the lower class—told pitiful tales of the damage done by rinderpest, drought, locusts, and the war. The women were meanly clad and looked half-starved. Dirty children ran about barefooted.

The reception given to the troops was the reverse of hearty, provisions were unobtainable, and the men viewed the coming of the soldiers with a listless apathy which bordered on sullenness. They gave up their arms, however, and were anxious to get passes enabling them to go to market with loads of dung. They seemed to take everything as a matter of course, and would express no opinion on the merits of their cause.

It was considered that this march proved that the British cavalry and mounted infantry were as mobile as the enemy's. Their loss in horses was very slight, and the survivors were fresh and fit after covering quite

forty miles a day. The infantry accomplished long marches without fatigue, doing one day as much as twenty miles.

But not everything that was occurring in and around Bloemfontein afforded the British so much satisfaction. They were surrounded and infested by spies and enemies, and were obliged to weed them out of Bloemfontein, by warning some to go, and carrying many away as prisoners. To the eastward and northward armed bands waged petty warfare, that was marked in the beginning by the shocking little "affair of the Glen," and at the end by the startling engagement in the Kornospruit—known in England as the Sanna's Post surprise.

It was on March 23rd that Lieutenant-Colonel Crabbe, Captain Trotter, and Lieutenant the Honourable Edward Lygon, all of the Grenadiers, with Lieutenant-Colonel Codrington, of the Coldstreams, and a trooper of the Grahamstown Light Horse, rode a few miles beyond their camp, on the Modder above the capital, and were shot down by some men of the Johannesburg Mounted Police. These men were reckoned as being some of the best shots in the Boer army. The British officers, armed only with gigantic pluck and Webley revolvers, nevertheless endeavoured to head them off—with pitiful fortune. Colonel Crabbe received a slight wound, Colonel Codrington, a severe one, and Lieutenant Lygon (one of the most admired and beloved men

in the army) was killed. All three had been previously wounded in Lord Methuen's engagements. Captain Trotter was also badly wounded.

Just a week later there was a notable little fight at Karee Siding, between Glen and Brandfort, with some of the Boers who blew up Glen Bridge and shot down our officers in the encounter at the Glen.

General Tucker's division in the centre with two encircling arms, one of cavalry under French and one of mounted infantry under Le Gallais, attacked the Boers on several kopjes, drove them from every position, and left them fleeing towards Brandfort. The British loss was about a hundred. By this blow they secured all the hills commanding Brandfort. This engagement again demonstrated the fact that modern arms create vast battlefields. The field of the Karee Siding affair had a front of ten to fifteen miles, making it excessively difficult to witness the fight intelligently or comprehend the movements of the forces.

The Sanna's Post (or Kornospruit) surprise deserves a chapter by itself.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### STRIDING TO PRETORIA

AFTER Sanna's Post at least seven thousand Boers, under the guerilla leaders Olivier and De Wet, moved toward the base of the Orange River Colony—as Lord Roberts had named the former Free State—and interest centred upon Dewetsdorp, south-east of Bloemfontein. At this place General Gatacre maintained a post of five companies—three of Royal Irish Rifles, and two of Mounted Infantry. Hearing of the retirement of the Ninth Division to Bloemfontein, Gatacre, who had never been supplied with nearly enough men to guard the great reach of Colonial frontier for which he was responsible, ordered the Dewetsdorp force to withdraw. It was enveloped by the enemy at Reddersburg, where, after a futile fight, it surrendered just when strong help was close at hand. This was General Gatacre's last activity before he was recalled.

General Rundle, and his command which had been at Kimberley, was ordered to Springfontein. Hunter's Tenth Division came out of Natal, and while the lower end of the new colony was filling with com-



batant Boers, Dalgety was surrounded at Wepener, and Chermiside (succeeding to Gatacre's place) and Brabazon were moving forward with the knowledge that the main British force at Bloemfontein was ready to do its part. The purpose of the British was for their southern commands to drive the Boers north, and for detachments of the main army to bag them on the way. The relief of Wepener would follow either automatically or by direct attack on its beleaguers. The Boers had seized the waterworks near Bloemfontein and the capital was obliged to subsist upon the water of the wells, most of which was productive of enteric, a malady always epidemic there in the summer-time, but much less general and severe since the river water had been brought to the city. Ian Hamilton was detailed to move on the waterworks, and General French, with General Pole-Carew, was to advance on Leeukop.

Sir Leslie Rundle, combining with Brabant and Hart, was to give the Boers battle at Dewetsdorp. The battle scene was set at that place on April 20th, but delays, which proved as fatal to the British schemes as they were unnecessary, kept off the contact of the opposing forces until the 23rd; for instance, one general wished to rest his infantry, and a despatch from Rundle to the Field-Marshal was misunderstood (probably incorrectly sent), and caused Lord Roberts to order Rundle to wait for Pole-Carew. The crafty Boers, with no more stomach for a fight arranged by

the British than they had ever shown, fired their guns during all of the 23rd without doing much harm, while Rundle held his ground in front of them, and French and Pole-Carew were drawing a net all around them. Then—on the night of the 23rd—the Boers slipped away, having sent off their waggons on the previous night. On their retreat they wasted a little time upon the obdurate force at Wepener, and then retired to Thaba N'chu, taking with them about 1,000 prisoners and seven guns as their prizes. The immediate relief of Wepener and the capture by General Ian Hamilton and Smith-Dorrien of the Bloemfontein waterworks are the only bright spots in this dark chapter.

Colonel Dalgety, commanding the advance guard of Brabant's division, had been in pursuit of some Boers who were coming up from the Cape Colony border along the edge of Basutoland. It was on April 9th that he was attacked by a far greater force than his own at Jammersburg Drift near Wepener. He prepared for a long resistance. On April 25th the attacks of Brabant on the besiegers proved successful and the Boers, not only beaten but afraid of capture by General French, fled northward.

On the 25th of April, Ridley's mounted brigade, largely made up of Australasians, and Smith-Dorrien's brigade of infantry went to Thaba N'chu to clear the way, and did so by gallant work with a loss of only twenty killed and wounded. General Hamilton fol-

lowed, and the British flag was hoisted for the second time over that nest of treacherous villages. General French took command and made some unsuccessful efforts to drive about 6,000 Boers from the near vicinity. Then, on April 28th, Ian Hamilton moved to Winburg to co-operate with Lord Roberts's northward march.

The brilliant General Hamilton entered Winburg on May 5th, after fighting every day for five days on the way. His then became the army of the right flank on the forward march to Pretoria. It was made up of Ridley's First Mounted Infantry Brigade, Smith-Dorrien's Nineteenth Brigade, the Twenty-first Brigade under Bruce-Hamilton, Broadwood's Cavalry Brigade, and some batteries of Field and Horse Artillery—five in all—and two five-inch guns. General Sir H. E. Colvile followed in the rear of Hamilton; Lord Roberts's main army moved straight forward, leaving the Sixth Division in Bloemfontein in reserve, Hart's Brigade had gone around to Kimberley to become part of Sir Archibald Hunter's Tenth Division, and this and Methuen's Division formed the army of the left flank. On that side of the country in advance of Lord Roberts's twenty-five-mile front, was Mahon pushing forward to Mafeking. Roberts had sent word to Baden-Powell to sit tight, and to General Buller to be prepared to break out of Natal and co-operate with the rest.

Hamilton fought the battle of Houtneck before he entered Winburg, and when he came into that town the main army was passing through Brandfort. With what now seems like a leap from the old capital the army entered the new seat, Kroonstadt, whither Steyn had taken his portable government. Heilbron was next taken by the army of the right flank, and there Christian De Wet parted with fifteen waggons of his convoy.

On May 24th the fore-fighters joined Roberts. All were nearing the Vaal except French, who was already there. Broadwood crossed and kept a way open on the night of May 25th, the Engineers having cut an inclined road into each bank for the guns and waggons. The place where the main army went over was a drift near Vereeniging. Hamilton and French went ahead, over Lindeque's Drift, French impatiently pushing far to the fore, until, on the 25th, he was opposed by Boer artillery in position on the Rand near Johannesburg.

Halted here, Lord Roberts's main force waited for the promulgation of his plan of attack. He had it ready on the instant, and French and Hamilton were executing their part of it the very next day, but we will take this opportunity to cast an eye all over the field and see what the outlying forces were about. General Hunter had chosen Colonel Mahon to go to the relief of Mafeking with 100 mounted men of Barton's

Brigade, 460 men of the Kimberley Mounted Corps, 440 of the Imperial Light Horse men, four Horse Artillery guns and two pom-poms. This force started on May 5th and engaged the Boers on May 13th at Kraipan Siding. Beating his way past the Boers Mahon forged ahead, and on May 15th, when twenty miles west of Mafeking, met Colonel Plumer's little band which had come down from the north for this purpose. Snyman, the Boer leader, knew of this, made a final effort to capture the town and, on May 13th, was beaten back by Baden-Powell, the ingenious, resourceful, and heroic commander of Mafeking. On May 16th Plumer and Mahon defeated the Boers in another engagement, and on May 17th relieved and entered the town.

Baden-Powell had held the town against the enemy from October 12th to May 17th—six months and six days. Mahon had gone to him, 223 miles in ten days, and had fought two battles on the way. Hunter advanced from Fourteen Streams to Christiania and Methuen marched from Boshof to Hoopstadt, both on Roberts's left, to flank the Boers if they checked Lord Roberts, or to capture them, or at least to protect Lord Roberts's line of communication, should the Boers retreat. In the meantime General Sir Redvers Buller had begun to move away from Ladysmith to the Free State. On June 22nd he had passed Laing's Neck and reached Standerton.

The Field-Marshal, now near Johannesburg, planned

to turn the enemy's position, and his two great finger-like antennæ, French and Hamilton, pressed on by Florida, to flank, and, if possible, turn the Boers while the main army advanced straight forward. It seized the railway junction at Germiston, east of Johannesburg, on the front, and partly at the side, of the Boer position. With the investment of Germiston Lord Roberts took several engines and much rolling-stock, which were of great value to him. His vanguard fought the battle of Johannesburg, in which many regiments—and notably the Gordons—suffered fearfully, but added to their record another fierce and awful battle ending in victory. There was no farther defence of the mining capital. A very short rest for the army followed, and then the Transvaal capital, Pretoria, fell on the 5th of June ; at least, it was upon that day that the army began to march into the town, though the Boers had marched out on the night of the 4th.

The first British flag raised in Pretoria was hoisted over the prison where the officers among the British prisoners were confined. This flag had been made out of a Transvaal "four-colour" flag by a prisoner, and when the first of the British, the Duke of Westminster and Winston Churchill, rode up to the jail on the morning of June 5th and demanded the surrender of the place, the gates were thrown open, the guards flung down their rifles, the prisoners cheered, and

the Transvaal flag came down from its pole to give place to the Union Jack.

It was at two o'clock in the afternoon that Lord Roberts and his staff and the foreign military attachés entered Pretoria. They advanced to the Central Square, where are the Parliament House, the Town Hall, and the offices of the Government officials. The Union Jack was run up over the Parliament House, while some cheered and most of the onlookers remained silent. Then came the "march past" of practically the whole army, Pole-Carew leading at the head of the thin, tough, browned, and dirty Guards; Ian Hamilton and his battered and ragged men following. For two hours—and some say for three—the great centipede of khaki and steel wound its way through the city and past the Commander-in-Chief. So, with stately dignity and perfect order and discipline, the forces of the new Government came in while Kruger and his satellites fled to the Portuguese border with as much of the people's gold as they could "lift" and as many of the State papers as they could take away to hide the proofs of the devilry, corruption, and fraud that had distinguished and finally ruined their rule.



## CHAPTER XXIV

### LORD ROBERTS, MASTER OF MEN

WE who were in and with the army could feel an instant and bone-deep change in the men around us when it became known that Field-Marshal Lord Roberts was coming out to take command of the forces.

The sentence "Bobs is coming" was like an abracadabra, opening the way ahead, levelling the kopjes, vanquishing the Boers, ending the tiresome disappointing struggle—all in anticipation, of course, and yet in an anticipation steel-girdered with confidence.

It was not only the men in the ranks who showed and exulted in this reinvigoration; their officers were just as certain that it was the master who was coming.

From that day it became my task to study this unique man, who is, I believe, more beloved and admired, trusted more implicitly, followed more unquestioningly, and obeyed more cheerfully (especially when he sets his army its hardest tasks) than any living man of whom we have knowledge.

The first time the correspondents saw him was at a

railway-car window at Modder River. He sent for them and addressed them as one who speaks to friends. It seemed to them that he lifted every disability, and brushed away every limitation which had hampered and almost crippled them in their work up to that time. They were to write what they pleased, he said, and this was not to be censored. Only their telegrams would be scrutinised. They were to go wherever he went, wherever they willed to go.

Many had never seen him before, but all surrendered to the spell that surcharges the atmosphere around him, for during this brief interview he revealed that sympathy, trust, and frankness, and that breadth of view which are among his most marked traits. They looked on his face as upon the face of a Man-Leader ; a man born to ride in the van of men, to be followed and obeyed.

To me his face suggests the front of a granite mountain, seamed, lined, battered by storm, strain, and racking change. It records acquaintance with every trial to which mortals are put, all suffered in the solitude of undivided responsibility. Care, worry, affliction, sickness, danger, unceasing reflection, all had left their marks there, yet all are written across a gentle, sympathetic countenance, never gay or merry, yet seldom stern, and wholly ignorant of passion.

I have known many great faces, but that of Lord Roberts is a face apart. I fancy that, in the minds of

their worshippers, some of the soberer gods of the old mythologies had faces like his.

He was as frank and liberal in his welcome to the foreign attachés as he had been to the war correspondents. The attachés had waited in Capetown until he sent for them. They came, thinking that they were going to be shunted aside and left out of the excitement, as they had been with a lesser army and a lesser general elsewhere on the other side of the continent.

But when they met Lord Roberts he said, in effect, "You are to do as you choose and go where you like—only please do not get in the way of any bullets, as I am responsible for your safety."

One night at the private dinner tendered to him, as described elsewhere in these pages, when the roses hung over every man's head in token of the liberty with which all were entitled to speak, without fear of more than an echo reaching the outer world, one of his friends said to me, "Lord Roberts never objects to the publication of anything he says before a gathering of men, because it is his rule never to say what he would regret to have repeated."

In person he is "Little Bobs."

He is one of those small packages in which the gods have so often packed military genius, as if it were a rare commodity, not obtainable in bulk. He dresses in serge khaki, which, plain as that always must be, he

renders the more plain by ridding it of all orders and decorations.

There are men on his staff—there was even an American newspaper reporter with one of the armies—who wore a line and a half of ribbons. But the chief, who is entitled to perhaps four lines, appears every day, for every duty and function, with a tunic as bare of decorations as that of any civilian. He is so neat and precise in his dress that I suspect he must have been a dandy in earlier life. He is quick and nervous in his movements, and his constant habit is to thrust either one or both hands under his belt—a practice which makes it easy for artists to familiarise the public with his figure. He is instantaneous and direct in conversation, and goes as straight to the point in view as a well-aimed bullet to a target. I have noticed that when he meets new people he advances toward them eagerly, listens intently, and in three minutes either engages the new acquaintance in earnest conversation or has done with him with a decisive nod of parting.

With the army in South Africa his headquarters form a court—almost as if he were a part of the Royalty he represents. You do not call upon him. You sign your name in a book, and he sends for you later if he wants to see you. It may be a duke whom you find in the central salle of the Residency—as it was in my case—and who offers the register for you to sign.

The Field-Marshal works continuously, and to do so has to be free from interruption ; therefore visitors meet him only at lunch or dinner. In Bloemfontein, where he was living between walls, his table was a small one standing a few feet from the head of the very large, long table at which sat his staff—his ponderous, impressive staff of distinguished men of the aristocracy. You dined with “Bobs,” in khaki of course, at his small table—if you were highly honoured ; or you might dine with his staff and be presented to him after the meal for as long or brief an interview as he pleased.

That is precisely the amount and extent of state about his surroundings. But all state vanishes when you touch the hand of “the Little Man,” and talk with him about the two subjects which engross him—the war around him and politics at home.

If you wonder that politics find such spacious lodgment as they do in his mind, you have not remembered how politics have affected him in his career as a general, here in South Africa, when he could have prevented this war by a vastly smaller one ; in Kandahar ; in many fields.

Lord Roberts never smokes tobacco, and with drink he has little to do. A glass of wine with two of the three meals suffices for him. He preaches temperance to his soldiers, and they all know that he shows no patience with those who drink to excess, and extols sobriety, but, like all broadminded men, he refrains

from advocating the impossible—one form of which is total abstinence.

He has never been known to use an oath, and, indeed, there must be comparatively few men whose religion influences them so deeply as does his in every affair of life. He never parades his piety, never forces it upon those around him. Yet on every Sunday since he joined his army he has attended Divine service. Not a word has he ever spoken to his staff suggesting or ordering their presence—yet he is certain to attend the weekly service—an example to the army so modestly and so persistently presented that it cannot but be powerful. When he took the sacrament at Driefontein, the other day, in the face, one might say, of the whole army, it was without a hint of the parading of religion. All saw in it an act of simple faith.

It is hard to reconcile his gentleness and sympathy with the firm—sometimes stern—course which a general so supreme in command, and at the head of so large an army, must often have to follow. I have asked many of his friends how he can unite these qualities, how he can possess traits which we imagine must war with one another.

“He does possess them, that’s all,” is the best answer I have had; “I don’t know how, but he does.”

“He is all things to all men, in the best sense of the phrase,” said one who knows him well. “He has the royal gift of remembering everybody, the human

quality of flawless tact, the superior, almost super-human, sense of justice. Good men like him because he is good ; kindly men find a responsive chord in his nature ; and those who are stern feel that he, too, is stern upon occasion." He has complimented a Tommy on his soldierliness in such a way as to win the man's loyalty to the end and surrender of his life, and on the very same day he has ordered home a general, knowing that the order carried with it the ever-enduring disgrace of a man who meant as well as himself, but had not the capacity to realise his ambition.

His army will do anything for him ; march longer, starve harder, go without tents, blankets, and rum more days and weeks, and die in greater numbers for him than for any other man alive. And they will do all these things willingly and gladly where other armies might protest and grumble, and go ahead with sullenness. He can get more out of an army, from the Guards down to the roughest scouting force (as he did between Modder River and Bloemfontein), than any Russian or German general could have extorted with an iron discipline and adamant authority. It was the so-called "London pets"—the Guards—who broke all European records in a three days' march into the Free State. Instead of grumbling they made it a matter for boasting. Whenever other privates would damn another leader, Roberts's men say simply, "Bobs knows what 'e's about" ; "Bobs will do the job." It



suffices the majority merely to sum him up with this phrase, "'E is a man!" He can make no mistake that his army will recognise. Whatever he orders or does is regarded as the reflection of superhuman inspiration.

Even if he fails he is certain to be considered infallible at the end. There may have been more than one Wellington at the head of Britain's armies in the past, but there has never been a previous Roberts—never in English history has there been such idolatry, or any such magnetic leader.

"The men feel that they know him and that he knows them," I was told. "It is a case of love returned for love, and admiration exchanged for admiration." He scrupulously returns the salute of every Tommy he meets. He speaks to hundreds about whatever he sees them doing, or whatever interests him or rouses his curiosity. He thanks whoever does anything for him, and compliments all who are smart or soldier-like in manner and brave in service. He knows the names of a multitude of men.

"Sometimes," said a general, "when I have been with him inspecting regiments in a new command, he has said: 'Now, in this regiment are those fellows who did so-and-so at Kabul,' or Tirah, or anywhere. And he asks for them by name and talks to them." He is sharp on offenders, and can detect looting, defects in dress, misbehaviour of any sort with so quick and keen an eye that the men feel—in this as in his courtesy—

that he is one of them. They know that he is to be reckoned with in every way.

We have all been slightly misled by the Boer word "commandeering." It makes stealing seem less offensive—in fact, under the new name of "commandeering" stealing commends itself to many of us. Lord Roberts has been awfully down on it. He seems not to have caught the spirit in which we who would not "steal" a pin have been commandeering Dutch Bibles, horses, and any other portables in our path. At a certain point on the veldt one of Roberts's staff was riding ahead of the Field-Marshal, and saw a Canadian with two fat fowls hanging from his saddle.

"Here," said the officer, "where did you get those fowls?"

"Commandeered 'em, sir."

"Well, for goodness' sake, hide them. Here's Lord Roberts just behind us. He'll have you shot."

Up cantered Lord Roberts with his face troubled.

"What is that man doing with those chickens?" he asked sternly.

"Sir," replied the staff officer, "he has understood that you are on very short rations, and he desires to offer the fowls for your dinner. He got them off a farmer close by."

"Why, how very kind," said the Field-Marshal, pleased to the heart, and smiling warmly. "What is your name? I am very much obliged to you."

"Now, no more of that, do you hear?" the officer whispered to the Canadian, who rode away, leaving his plunder, and doubtless very glad to part with it as he did.

The officers are as anxious to please the Field-Marshal as the men, and one class thinks no less of his genius and his marvellous personality than the other. Those who are near to him say that when he is talking to an officer about his work, he makes you feel that you have his entire confidence, and that he believes you will do the business better than any one else could do it. But if you do it wrong he will tell you so as frankly, and will point out the why and wherefore of his displeasure. And I don't envy the feelings of a man who knows he has displeased the chief. In using men he is as broad as the sky. His estimate of a man's fitness or value for whatever purpose he needs him is never in the least affected by any knowledge he may have of irregularities in the man's private life. "I did not ask if the man drinks or gambles," he will say, "I wanted to know whether he could circumvent the Boers, and cut the railway to prevent their escape."

Above all else, "Bobs" is a man of action. His life is all activity, and his mind works with his body—that is, in the heat of affairs and of movement his brain is coolest and works most quickly. His compact, nervey little body is all a reservoir of strength, and you can speak of his physique as you speak of the physique of a giant. Indeed, he lives on his nerve and draws upon

his strength, as if both were inexhaustible. He will sit and write for ten days on end, dealing with a multitude of varied subjects—civil, military, covering the enormous range of view of a soldier and an administrator; and then, if the need comes, he will bounce on a horse and ride fifty or sixty miles, tiring lieutenants whose lives are spent in the saddle.

He lives very plainly, asking for few comforts and no luxuries. When he visited Modder River he found Lord Methuen established in the hotel, and that general had been at the pains to clear out a part of the building and appoint it for the Field-Marshal's lodgings. But Lord Roberts, thanking him, remarked that he had ordered his tent to be set on the veldt, and that there he meant to stay. When his army is in motion, marching and fighting, he travels with a covered waggon and a tent, the first being his house and the second his workroom. The waggon is a light four-wheeled contrivance whose top is a roomy and complete enclosure and defence against rain and cold wind. On the side-board is painted "F.M. Lord Roberts," so that we may all know it when it comes along.

Such is the famous "Bobs"—like so many other men at so many points, so ordinary in a hundred little human ways, yet so separated from us all in other respects—in other respects which seem to us superhuman, that are antagonistic to much of what we know of him, that are inscrutable, that seem illogical when we try to account for him, and sum him up.

## CHAPTER XXV

### A GROUP OF GENERALS

I NOTICED, after my return to London, that I was more often asked about Lord Kitchener than about any other general except the great Field-Marshal, who, here as with the army, nearly blocks the whole horizon—as he should.

There was then little need to discuss Lord Kitchener either as an independent or as a lieutenant of Lord Roberts. In neither capacity has he counted for much in the war, or increased his prestige as either a fighter or a strategist. He made a meteoric appearance during our pursuit and subsequent surrounding of Cronje's army, but it was not the common opinion that he pleased the Field-Marshal by his military methods. They reached their climax at Paardeberg, and appeared too much like an exaggeration of the worst of Lord Methuen's mistakes.

The fact that Lord Kitchener was summarily sent away as soon as Lord Roberts came up with the besieging force, and that the ex-Sirdar's orders were to put down a petty rebellion of 400 farmers at Prieska

carried with it a suggestion which had but one interpretation where I heard it discussed.

This experience is quite apart from another fact about Lord Kitchener, which was almost sensationally noticeable from the day he landed in South Africa. This was the fact of his unpopularity with the officers throughout the army—to which, of course, Lord Roberts was never a party.

A member of Parliament whom I met in Kimberley went so far as to characterise this feeling as evidence of a “conspiracy” against the hero of Omdurman, but I afterwards came to see that there was no combination or organised activity against Lord Kitchener. He was simply regarded as a man reputed to be needlessly stern, severe, and exacting when in command.

His first conspicuous act when in South Africa was the withdrawal of the transport service from separated commands, in order that it should be managed by the Army Service Corps. Thus it came about that every brigadier and colonel saw a certain amount of his power shifted to what he considered a subordinate branch of the service. Considerable latitude in the enjoyment of comforts and extras which had been made possible when these officers controlled the waggons was also curtailed. The army wailed and gnashed its teeth, but I confess I always thought that reason and right were on Lord Kitchener's side in this matter. Lord Kitchener's plan was the only one by which an

insufficient number of waggons and teams could be utilised for all that they were worth.

And I suspect it is as true to-day as it was last year that even if General Lord Kitchener has not shone as a fighting-man in South Africa, he remains the greatest military organiser of his generation. What he did in leading up to and winning the battle of Omdurman was the sort of work in which he stands alone. And why might he not have paralleled this feat in South Africa if he had been sent there at the beginning—or a few months earlier?

But though General Kitchener is not next to Lord Roberts in success in this war, there is a general who must soon receive at home the credit and the plaudits which he has gained from the army in the field.

His name is French—Major-General J. D. P. French—and, if I mistake not, it is for ever to be coupled with Lord Roberts's in connection with this war in the hearts and minds of his countrymen. Chance is always a great factor in the success of a soldier, and chance has been so good to General French as to send him to the east, the middle, the west, and the north, nearly always in time to do (or to help in) some master stroke. It can almost be said that he figured in every great success of the British arms from Elandslaagte to Bloemfontein—and since.

He had but just landed in Natal from England, and been at the front about forty-eight hours, when he



was put in charge of the Natal cavalry, and sent to fight the terrible yet splendid engagement at Elandslaagte. From Natal he went to the northern frontier of Cape Colony, and held the Boers in check there for many weeks, never succeeding in vanquishing them, but preventing their farther descent into the colony, and the consequent rising of the disloyal Dutch subjects of the Queen in that large district.

I was not with the armies either in Natal or around Rensburg, but where I was one continually heard of the extraordinary work General French was accomplishing on the Free State border. He maintained a position thirty to thirty-five miles in length, and the Boers told us that in all this war (this was before Lord Roberts had taken command) no British general had so astonished and wearied them. Commandoes were sent from Natal and taken from Maaghersfontein to create the extended wall that was needed to face this restless, persistent general, who hammered away in one county, as it were, in the morning, and in another on the same afternoon.

Just before Lord Roberts took command a story that ran through the multitude of officers' mess tents in the field was to the effect that General French had informed the authorities that he could force his way through the enemy's lines and into the Free State if he could bombard Colesberg. He was desirous of doing so, it was said, but the permission was refused.

I cannot say how true this is, but it was not contradicted by any one.

Little by little and most quietly the cavalry were withdrawn from that frontier after Lord Roberts's arrival, to be massed again under this tireless general in the neighbourhood of Graspan, whence he made a magnificent march that was truly said to be the admiration of the whole army. From Ramdam to Jacobsdal and on to Paardeberg he chased and herded the Boers, as he did afterwards from Bloemfontein to Pretoria. Leaving Cronje in full flight, General French, without pausing, flew over to Kimberley and literally purged its neighbourhood of Boers. Here he added the relief of the diamond city to his triumphs. This was done under Lord Roberts's planning and orders, yet very great credit remains to French for the manner in which he disposed of the obstacles that he had to overcome.

Without waiting for applause or rest at Kimberley, he pushed back to Lord Roberts's main army, and reached it in time to win a great share of the credit for that greatest *coup* of the war. He repulsed the Boer reinforcements, and by utilising a certain position in the field he made it evident to Cronje and his disheartened men that a longer stay in the river-bed was out of the question.

During this very extraordinary sweep that he made from Graspan around to Kimberley he did constant

damage, capturing transport waggons, destroying laagers, and repulsing various bodies of Boers. Violent rains, fearful thunderstorms, choking dust that pursued him for days, were the lesser hindrances in his way.

The greater ones were the result upon his horses of the fearful strain to which they were put, the scarcity of fodder, the difficulty in getting water, and the limited quantity of food at his disposal for his men.

As to his personality, the phrase "the square little general" would serve to describe him in army circles without a mention of his name. He has the shape of a brick as well as the best characteristics of one. He is a short, thick chunk of a man, who always stands with his feet and legs well apart, and sits hunched up on his saddle like a Red Indian squaw. A view of his back suggests the thick-set, neckless shape of General Grant, and I suspect there is a great deal of Grant's doggedness in him. Like Grant, too, he shows no concern for externals.

He is quiet, undemonstrative, easy, and gentle. When you are with his command you don't notice him, you don't think about him—unless you are a soldier, and then you are glad you are there. He is perfectly accessible to any one, but speaks very little when addressed. He must be a fine judge of men, for he has a splendid staff around him—splendid in the sense that they are all soldierly like himself, and all active and useful. Judging from the way his men live in the

country when they are swarming over it, he must be easy, as true soldiers are in those situations, though the discipline of the rank and file is excellent. You do not notice his dress, but if you should it would be seen to be more serviceable than smart.

When he went over to Thaba N'chu from Bloemfontein on a bill-sticking expedition (as the distribution of Lord Roberts's proclamation was called) he showed by his treatment of the Boers that he had a very kindly nature. He stopped at night in the Boer houses, and got on very well with the families, with all of whose members he shook hands, while saying pleasant things to them.

In one case a Boer said to him, "I would be fighting you if I had not got consumption." The general replied, "Oh, I am sorry to hear that you are ill. I hope you will soon get better."

A snapshot of him receiving the surrender of Thaba N'chu from the landdrost would have been an interesting picture. Both men stood with their hats on the backs of their heads, the landdrost had his hands shoved deep in his pockets, and French stood with his legs apart like a little Colossus, looking up at the civilian, who was ex-President Brand's son. Presently the landdrost took off his hat.

Whether General French told him to do so, or whether he felt the commanding influence of the general—who knows?

## CHAPTER XXVI

### BRITISH OFFICERS AND CHAPLAINS

THE British officer went to South Africa eagerly "to enjoy a little sport." And he went there confidently, leaving word in England that he would "be back by Christmas."

He has had a great deal of sport since then, and he has given up speculating about when he will come home ; but he has learned a lot, unlearned a lot, and is vastly more valuable to his country than when he first threw aside his sword, and smudged his helmet-spike and the stars on his shoulders.

He has had a great deal more practical professional experience than has come to any other men in the other armies of the world, and yet—and here's the whole trouble—he feels no more like a professional soldier than before. He is still an amateur, by whom the studies, the periodical literature, the "shop" discussions, and the multitudinous moot points of military science are both unloved and unknown.

As a man the British officer is superb.

He will do his duty. He does not fear the Boers or

death. He sets the finest example of unwavering patience and manly courage to a body of privates already richer in those qualities than any others in Europe ; but he is thinking of the hounds, of polo, of cricket, of Goodwood and Ascot—of anything except of making soldiering his life-work and the ladder to a career.

The disappointment of the Colonial officers was painful when they discovered that the average British officer was a tyro at the game, like themselves.

I came to know several bright Colonial officers, and though they recovered from their earliest notion that the regular officer was overbearing and stupid, they never changed their opinion that he ought to know about fighting as a profession—and did not.

These Colonials were of this type: they hungered to be near the Regulars and to fight beside them, and they spent their days watching the troops from the Mother Country in order to master every detail of regular regimental and camp life. Whenever they could do so, they would walk through the nearest camp of "Tommies," and then go back and say to their fellow-officers: "They are having a new kind of inspection over there—inspecting kits—let us have it ;" or to the privates: "Boys, the Regulars don't go to bathe in a d—mob as we do ; they go in marching order, the same as they would go on parade, only without their arms. We must do so, too ; we must not let them get the laugh on us."

The Colonial private is always as eager as his officer to do his best and learn his utmost, and no work was too hard for any of them, if it was in the direction of learning to be "like the fellows from home."

At first, the Regular officer (who has the race-caution against leaping into indiscriminate friendships) held aloof from the Colonial, and the Colonists used to remark, "You can get diamonds out of the De Beers safe easier than conversation out of a British officer." But the compulsory bed-fellowships of a campaign, and the rough work of war done side by side, soon led the cautious Regular to pick out the good fellows among the auxiliaries, and to make friends of them.

Then it was that the Colonial, full of the most earnest soldierly ambition (though he was a doctor or an architect at home), discovered that the men whom he had looked up to as so many little gods of war, wanted always to talk of sport and speculation, love and good dining—but never of war.

I am not leaving it to be inferred that the Colonial officer or private is a better fighting-man, all in all, than the Regular; but it is true that both have their strong points of superiority. The Colonials fell into the Boers' methods of rough warfare, and were able to match the Boers' game more quickly—and, to the last, they were able to fight the Boers more economically than the Regulars. That is merely saying that they fitted very well into South African warfare; a different



thing from saying that they would all prove as valuable in a European war.

One thing is certain: of two sad deficiencies of the army—scouting and strategy—the Colonials filled up one empty space. They added excellent scouts to the force.

Scouting at the beginning of the war, on one side of South Africa, was the most grotesque farce imaginable. The British had a lot of men chosen for their ability to speak Dutch, which was a dangerous quality in a rebellious Dutch colony, and their knowledge of the country, which would have been of more value had the men been of a higher grade of mental development. When they were not drawing absolutely ridiculous maps, as to the accuracy of every point in which no two ever agreed, they used to be sent "to draw the enemy's fire." This latter trick was looked upon as a triumph of genius, and perhaps it was, but some of us never could quite grasp its value in the way it was done. It was different when the Australians and Canadians, New Zealanders, and Africanders got to work. They used to swarm over the enemy's country in ones and twos, defying the cowardly Boers, stampeding the families, living on the fat of the land, and mastering the topography; indeed, some of them could find their way about at night like cats.

The cowboys, bushrangers, and Africanders all took naturally to fighting on their bellies, to getting and

keeping excellent cover, and to shooting only when there was something to aim at, instead of emptying their rifles at rocks and sage-brush by the hour.

One of the best points about the Colonial marks the difference between the character of the self-reliant pioneers in new lands and the dependent masses in old countries. It may be that European armies will never be stocked with men of such independence and self-confidence as not to care whether their officers are with them or absent, are alive or dead. Yet it was this quality which made possible much of the work done by the Colonials.

Take, for instance, the widely loose formation in which such super-excellent troops as Brabant's Horse went into action. I mention that body, because it was officered by Imperial officers—by Regulars who had the modesty and wisdom not to try to alter the Colonial's methods, but simply to drill and train and discipline him for camp life and the rough essentials of organisation, and then to make the most of his rough but efficient and successful methods in warfare.

These Colonials went into action so spread out that a company covered nearly a mile of single line, and the captain was often both unseen and unheard by his men. In this way the men of the troop missed more bullets than they caught, had as fair a chance for their better marksmanship as the Boers had for their poor shooting, disguised their real strength, or weakness of numbers,

just as the Boers did, and still remained, as they began, with the advantage of being better shots and braver men.

There is not a feature of all this that the more keen and ambitious British officers in South Africa have not noted and applied to the methods of their own men—which is one reason why I say they are of greater value to Great Britain than when they left these shores for a “bit of sport” that was to last till Christmas.

Some of the worst faults in the British army at the beginning of the war had their source in race peculiarities, for the Anglo-Saxon is always unprepared for war, and always is willing to take it on before he is prepared. He always has an immeasurable contempt for his antagonist as a fighter, and such a monumental conceit of his own abilities that he invariably enters upon a war as if it were to be a military promenade, and over in a few weeks.

But this does not excuse the generalship which marches a force of foot against the most mobile foe in Christendom, which sets an army going without tents, overcoats, or sufficient food, which slavishly clings to a railway as if it were an essential wing of the army, and then persists in frontal attacks and bull-dog assaults, as if strategy could only be practised by a rude and ignorant enemy.

I suggest no one by this category, for such mistakes and worse were not confined to any one leader. Not

even a born soldier and a great one, like Lord Roberts, can move six or seven columns and capture two foreign countries without mistake, if the only instinctive, keen, and practised generals under him are a French, a Macdonald, a Kelly-Kenny, an Ian Hamilton, and a Pole-Carew.

The result was that in four weeks, while the British were at Bloemfontein, they botched the subjection of the conquered half of the Free State, were fooled with a lot of antiquated rifles handed in by men who kept their Mausers and continued to use them, suffered the Kornospruit surprise, failed to relieve Broadwood at that place, and were debited with the unpardonable mishap at Karree Siding.

But the only men who have not been improved are the Tommies. I do not know how you could improve "Tommy" without refitting him with a bigger brain—and then he would be another fellow, not so good in some ways, though better in others. Perhaps your old Indian officers stand beside Tommy in generally unimprovable excellence. They struck me from the first as more practised, more resourceful, and much more nearly of the spirit of professionals than the rest.

But all the officers are better soldiers for having been in South Africa. There they learned that a mere good opinion of yourself is not the best weapon in war, and that even an odorous, unwashed Boer, with no other science than that of a hunter, can take a lot of

beating—with a deal of thinking and planning and loss of men thrown in.

Some of our padres on the field came to me about a paragraph that was seen in one of the London dailies which reached us at the front, and that was ricocheted all over Great Britain, bringing complaint and denunciation on their devoted heads, and dismay into pious circles at home.

Our padres know that I admire every one whom I have met among them, and will right them if I can. The bomb that has been thrown, like a Boer shell at a red-cross flag, into their company is of this fashion. The writer describes a church parade in camp, in Natal, where, between battles, a general and his command were drawn up to hear the word of God.

“It was one of those occasions,” says the eloquent correspondent, “when a fine preacher might have given comfort and strength where both were sorely needed, and have printed on many minds a permanent impression. The bridegroom opportunity had come. But the Church had her lamp untrimmed. A chaplain with a raucous voice discoursed on the details of ‘the siege and surrender of Jericho.’ The soldiers froze into apathy and, after a while, the formal perfunctory service reached its welcome conclusion. As I marched home an officer said to me, ‘Why is it, when the Church spends so much on missionary work among the

heathen, she does not take the trouble to send good men to preach to her own sons in time of war?'"

Of course, it is wholly impossible to defend a Church which sends to the front a man whose voice is displeasing to one of the war correspondents. And I am not going to attempt to justify a clergyman for selecting a theme of battle when he addresses a multitude of soldiers.

What seems to me a great pity is, that this correspondent happened upon this clergyman upon that Sunday, and a greater pity is that he should have drawn up from this single case an indictment against all the clergy who are with our armies.

For my part, I found no lack of "good men" in Methuen's army, and I have not noticed a departure from the rule in Lord Roberts's immediate command. Some of us, who have been attached to the western forces all the time, have more than once had occasion to call attention to the zealous, unselfish, and noble work of not only the regular commissioned chaplains who are with us, but of the volunteer clergy as well.

There has, it is true, been some kindly disagreement among the onlookers as to whether it behoved clergymen to advance with the troops into the heat of battle, there to minister to the dying while bullets shredded the air, and men were falling around them. For we have chaplains who have done this, and chaplains who have served as "gallopers," dashing in and out of

awful danger in the worst of all the engagements. This was only when some one must—and there was no one else. Perhaps they should have stayed at the field hospital—it is not for me to say—but only think how impossible it must be for men who have literally shouldered death aside in battle to fail to reach the soldier's heart in their sermons!

There have been not only fighting chaplains, but chaplains who have zealously remained in the near rear to succour the wounded and dying as fast as they were brought out of the volcanoes of shot and shell; we have enjoyed the sermons of both sorts, for both have chosen their themes and arguments to suit and to stir the soldier mind; but I do not remember to have known or heard of a single chaplain who deserves the reflected odium which my gifted comrade's criticism is said to have cast back upon them all.



## CHAPTER XXVII

### A WORD OF COMPLAINT, AND ANOTHER OF PRAISE

BATTERED externally, disordered inside, unable to digest food for weeks, nursing bruises and ailments, half a dozen at once, I look upon the war as having ill repaid me for the kindly and jubilant tone in which I have dealt with it. And, oh ! how sick of it I grew to be—how deadly, unutterably sick of it ! In this strain I wrote from Bloemfontein at the end of April ; and this was not all. I continued as follows :—the long months of sand diet and hard faring under Methuen took from me a stomach which an ostrich would have envied, and exchanged for it a second-hand, worn-out apparatus which turns upside down at the approach of any food except diluted milk.

A novel method of alighting from a Cape car into a trench with the cart on top of me left me one-legged for five weeks, after which I found myself with a low-class, no-account limb in which I have no confidence. Upon my recovering this inferior and makeshift other leg, my horse shot me into a wire fence which tore both arms into shreds, painted one thigh like an ome-

lette, and the other like a South African sunset, and left me an internal fracture which I must keep as a perpetual souvenir of what we are all beginning to speak of as "the bore war."

Try to imagine the spirits of a man fashioned in the image of his Creator who finds himself thus gradually changing into an exhibit for a medical museum, and you begin to obtain a glimpse of the fatigue with which I now view this war.

After Bloemfontein we all felt that we had seen by far the best and liveliest of it. There could be no more new scenes or surroundings in what was to come. The Boer would hide, the veldt would reach away, the valiant Briton would endure—on and on and on; no one knew how far; no one knew how long! There might be one more great battle, or there might not. And then we might see six months or a year of petty, piffling guerilla work—by little bands, all over the veldt—and this final protracted stage would be attended by all the discomforts of campaigning in a desert which was introduced to us as a baked and dusty Sahara, but was soon to be a wet, soggy expanse, growing colder and colder, until daily for weeks the pickets should be found frozen to death at their posts.

What an outlook! What a prospect for description by one who has seen it all and endured it all—except the worst of the cold.

There are other monotonies—such as seeing your

dearest friend brought back dead—just as surely as you make a friend; such as seeing other correspondents taking ill and going home—or to the hospitals; such as going a day or two without food, or a night or two in bed with a pool to lie in and a rain-storm for cover. And then the private sicknesses and accidents, and the public checks and disasters. How all of it gets on one's nerves and grinds and tears them—until one loathes the break of a new day, the recurrence of meal-times, the daily struggle with the censor over the last petty sniping; yes, even the bugle-calls for bed!

That is morbid, abnormal. I know it. The more abnormal it is the more it brings out the picture.

Seven months of our experience would not leave anything normal, except a mummy or a goat. We were all sick. Some were sick with disease, most were sick of the war, and many were sick in both senses. I could forge thousands of signatures to that statement, and you might publish them. You would not hear a protest from any one.

This was the frame of mind I took with me out of Bloemfontein, with its 5,000 enteric patients, its maddeningly dull routine of life, and the unbroken horizon of monotony ahead of its stagnant conquerors. All around the town lay the veldt, with camps in clusters on every hand. We who were in town had been saying that there must be less monotony in these camps, where the drinking water was not poison, where the

Boers relieved the situation by occasional sniping, and where everybody stopped the farmers on their way to market and bought all the produce we so sadly lacked in town.

But we had not been out on the veldt since Korne-spruit, since which disaster the rains had set in steadily and cold weather had come.

The train pulled out for its eight- or nine-hour journey to Norvals Pont and Naauwpoort, and we looked out of the windows. What did we see? Nothing but an illimitable spongy, stodgy bog, with a driving cold rain beating upon it. And living upon it, without tents, were soldiers—soldiers everywhere. Mentally I asked forgiveness for having, during even one moment, thought of my own discomforts and worries. Some of those men had been here guarding the railway a whole month. They had begun the task immediately at the end of the awful strain of the Field-Marshal's progress from Graspan to Bloemfontein, when they marched as no Europeans ever marched before, and were starved as none ever should be again.

Now the bitterly cold driving rains had come and turned the veldt into a marsh. And here I found them like so many half-drowned rats, wet as the veldt beneath them, wet as the air around them, shivering, playing drum tunes with their teeth, coughing, walking, and stamping to keep warm—doing everything except complaining.

I? My complaints? Why, beside those men, I was a duke with a palace of comforts. And if I had their complaints to make instead of my own, I should have been under and not a-top of the wicked, cruel veldt.

And these were Guards, mind you—the few first thousands spread over the first few miles; Grenadiers, Scots, Coldstreams! “London pets” you have often called them; “tin soldiers,” and you have laughed at them in your London homes and newspapers. Well, they did not complain at that, and they are not complaining at this. The officers were glad to take anything we could give them to read, and the men did not spurn small offerings of tobacco, but it is only just to say that none of them asked for anything.

Have you thought of what the Guards did in this war? Has any one taken the trouble to tell a little of the tale which, once told, would make every Englishman ashamed who even called them “pets” or “feather-bed soldiers”? It was the Guards who bore the bloody brunt of the fight at Belmont. It was the Guards who were to the fore in the awful fight at Modder River. It was the Guards and one or two other sets of fighters who held back the Boers at Maaghersfontein. It was the Guards who broke all records in the march from Kimberley to Bloemfontein. After that they marched and fought to the Transvaal and from Waterval border to Koomatieport—the last stretch being 146 miles

walked in 13 days, over mountains and carrying 5-inch siege guns and naval 12-pounders, forty miles being done on a road they made for themselves. From May until October, when I last heard from them, they had not seen a tent; after Modder they only slept eight nights in tents. What think you of that as a record for feather-bed pressers, pets, and home-guards?

Down the line we came to a station and camp which presented a picture of misery as complete as any that I ever saw in Chinese slum, Whitechapel alley, or negro barracks in New York. It was misery pared down to the raw, though none of its sufferers seemed aware of it. The beastly veldt was a mosaic of little pools and sodden tufts of sage. Upon this walked two or three companies of soldiers. The rain beat upon everybody and everything furiously, and an eager wind slapped and whipped it about. There were three or four shelters. One, the largest, was made by throwing a tarpaulin sheet over two piles of boxes. It was only breast high, and covered sopping wet ground, but it served as the mess-room and retreat for the officers, who came out, by the way, in their wringing wet clothes to ask us the usual shop-worn questions about the latest rumour that Mafeking was relieved, and another that Buller had at last succeeded in doing something.

I could see into their tent, and noticed that they lived on bully beef, tinned milk, tea, and jam—delicious

things for a picnic—if the picnic does not last seven months on end.

Each of the other two shelters was made by throwing a porous blue army blanket over a pole and pinning down the sides so as to make a burrow two feet high and six feet long. It seemed to me that it must be slightly wetter and a hundred-fold more disagreeable in such a hutch than out on the veldt. It was out on the veldt that we saw the Tommies—the poor, neglected, all-suffering, woebegone-looking, but none the less devil-may-care Tommies. I wonder if the kindly society which is clamouring to know what ill-treatment our horses suffer would continue to worry itself about the horses after seeing the men?

Perhaps they would, though the fact is there is never any unnecessary ill-treatment of a horse in this army, whereas the men—but that is the story I am telling.

The Tommies were walking up and down in the rain. Their overcoats were not only soaking wet, but, for some strange military reason, were split behind straight up to the small of each man's back so as to expose all of each leg to the wet. A few had put blankets over their coats, and were also walking, walking, walking. One was seated on a box with an audience of three others on boxes, and was singing a music-hall ditty vigorously through his nose. Several who walked about were whistling. All seemed either very happy or reasonably so. I can no more account for their



spirits than I can explain the motive of the lion tamer's virago wife who cried "coward!" at him when he left her in the middle of an extra long curtain lecture to go and sleep in the lion's cage.

They had been soaking wet and chilled to the bone for days. They could cook nothing, boil nothing, heat nothing, for not a dry thing with which to make a fire could be found upon the soaking veldt. They doubtless had plenty to eat, but it was all tinned stuff, and must have been taken cold and eaten, each thing by itself, without a chance of making toothsome combinations. Plenty were dying, plenty were sickening, others must have felt very uncomfortable; yet those who were of the mettle to survive were whistling, singing, and cracking jokes. They are welcome to crack one at me for speaking of my own troubles, where men have to live, as I saw, perhaps, 20,000 living, between Bloemfontein and Norvals Pont.

"The Tommies always whistle and sing when it rains," said one of the officers on the train. That I had not noticed; but I will say for Tommy that, except for two or three days after our reverse at Maaghersfontein, I never saw him when he was not cheerful.

Tommy is the queerest human I ever saw—the most inexplicable. When his rations are down to two biscuits in three days, you may hear the fact mentioned, in an incidental way, by a man here and there, but no

one growls about it, as sailors would do. When Tommy is marched in suffocating heat until his mates begin to drop out of the ranks or fall on their faces from the ranks, a play of repartee will spring up among them, and comical ideas and phrases will fly from line to line. Tommy is seldom witty—at least, I have heard little genuine wit in the ranks—but he is droll and comical in a high degree.

I wonder if I told you of the talk I heard when the first Reservists came to Modder? “I say, mate,” said a Tommy, “them blooming new chaps says they’re a-bustin’ for a fight. I’ve always noticed that men in barricks and men fresh from ’ome is sure to be bustin’ for a fight. Well, let ’em bust. I know what we’re bustin’ for; we’re bustin’ to git ’ome.”

And here’s another sample. Some one discovers that it is Sunday. It is a little after twelve o’clock. He announces these facts. “I can see the people at ’ome,” another replies. “They’ve all got bloomin’ button-’oles, and they’re standing around waitin’ for the pubs to open.”

Tommy wots not the past, and heeds not the future—that has been truly said of him. Yesterday’s battle and its terrors, and the fact that only nine men are in the tent that held sixteen last night, seem to impress him much less than a sudden flight of locusts. Of the battle he casually remarks, “It certainly were a bit thick, sir.” But the locusts excite him wonderfully.

I have seen all the men of the Coldstream and the Scots Guards out of their tents in their undershirts and breeches, whacking away at billions of locusts with bayonets, sheaths, saucepans, haversacks, helmets, braces, sticks, short shovels, tunics, boots—with everything they could lay hands on—and all shouting and laughing like schoolboys. You have heard what one said when he saw his first locusts: "Blime me," said he, "if even the blooming butterflies ain't khaki down 'ere."

But not even to-day does Tommy consider.

We have been halted after dark knowing that there was to be a fight at daybreak. Firewood was to be gathered, fires made, tea and biscuits served, and when this was over it was half-past eight o'clock. The obvious thing was to turn in with one's wretched blanket against the eager, nipping night, and get all the sleep possible. Yet at ten, even at eleven o'clock, I have awakened and seen large groups of Tommies around the feeble embers of the fires, smoking and jawing and yarning, while in the darker distance others sat in little bunches talking of the ways of their officers, the pranks of their mates in barracks—or what they would eat and drink if they were to land in London that night.

What Tommy is made of I don't know. I recall one brutal night in the veldt during a flying march when I was separated from my kit, and had only a borrowed mackintosh to cover me—or to put beneath

me on the wet ground, as I pleased. A whole army lay in blankets around me, and as I could not sleep I made half-a-dozen long tours among my neighbours. Certainly a quarter—perhaps a third of the men—were neither asleep nor trying to be. Some were standing in groups, some were sitting up and gossiping, one was actually singing for the entertainment of a little crowd. In the morning I got on my horse fevered and tired to the marrow, but Tommy did an eleven miles' march under a blazing sun, with repartee flinging up and down the ranks like heat lightning in a summer evening sky.

He goes about his work like a cog in a machine. He may be awakened at half-past two o'clock in the morning, or at five, but he rises just as readily, with a ripple of good-natured comment in the ranks, broken only at great distances by the snarl of an ill-tempered, exceptional being. There is always a good deal of to-do about missing bits of accoutrement, but he is fully harnessed, like a cart horse, in ten minutes' time, and waiting for his coffee or his cocoa. He may be roused for battle, or for a blistering march, or for a quiet day in camp, but his demeanour is the same, precisely, under all circumstances. For imperturbability he is a wonder. He drinks when he gets a chance, as we have seen in London, but he goes without a drop of spirits as philosophically as he gets tipsy. In town after town that we have come to the first order was to sell Tommy

no spirits, and at times it has seemed to me hard on the well-behaved that they should suffer for the others—knowing by personal feeling how welcome a bracing drink is a-top of a battle or a wearing march.

It is said that some soldiers always manage to get drink, by hook or crook. Perhaps they do ; but I have not seen six drunken soldiers in the seven months I've lived with them. And I have only seen one fist fight.

Finally, Tommy is musical, but only in a way. In every group there would be some man who sang the latest music-hall songs, or one who whistled well. But the men seldom sang in concert either on the march or in camp—I mean, that I never have heard a regiment sing, or even a full company.

Then here's to you, Tommy Atkins. I remember what one of you said to another as you passed my tent one morning, "When you wrote 'ome, I 'ope you didn't tell them how blooming well up to our necks we are in blood? No? That's right. They git enough of that out o' the doily poipers."

It is not often that one hears Tommy make a remark like that, suggesting that he realises his situation. Rather does his mental attitude always call to mind the bearing of the man who said to one who quarrelled with him: "If you hit me and I find it out, I shall do something to you."

Tommy may be hit by bullets, exposure, heat, frost, fatigue, and all the rest, but he never finds it out.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### RINGED ROUND BY SPIES

THE lights of the crowded and busy hotel bathed the broad stoep where forty men and women in evening dress chatted over iced beverages and burning tobacco.

The great windows of the drawing-room flung out the strongest radiance, and behind them a small company listened to a spirited ballad by the most musical of the guests.

Beyond the stoep the hotel lights and the paler gleaming of the moon melted together among the shrubs and small trees of a semi-tropical garden, where deep shadows chequered the yellow driveway and the paths.

This was in Capetown—a fair and enticing corner in a shabby, dusty city ; a corner all loveliness, where the sinister shadow of rebellion and but half-suppressed treason murks every moral aspect.

“Mother,” said a golden-haired German maiden, “I will get my wrap and walk out a little with Captain Simple, of the Southumberland Rifles.”

“Yes, darling ; cover up warmly, dear—but as I was

saying, Major Candour——” and the jewel-decked matron turned again to her *tête-à-tête* with an officer in a corner of the stoep.

“Where’s father?” the daughter inquired, as she again passed her mother on her way to walk in the moonlit garden.

“He’s taking a little something with Colonel Stonehead, in the smoking-room, darling; don’t disturb him. As I was just remarking, Major, I know the Boers, and if you go and bombard Colesberg, and do such things all over the Free State—destroying towns and houses—they will become very cruel and bitter. They will kill all their prisoners, and they will rouse Cape Colony to help them.”

“But we shall do nothing of the sort.”

“Ah, I don’t know, Major. Perhaps you have not heard that General French is asking permission to shell Colesberg? Ah, dear me! I am so afraid he will do it—and we shall have the whole Colony to fight.”

“My dear madam,” Major Candour replied, “I was at the Castle all the afternoon. I know everything that is going on. The generals all have orders not to bombard any towns or damage any property.”

“Oh, I am so glad,” the matron answered. “I was sure we would not make such a mistake. What a beautiful night it is, Major. But yet it is chilly. If you will excuse me, I will take something to put over my



darling's head, so that she sha'n't catch cold. Won't you join my husband and the Colonel in the smoking-room?"

In the smoking-room the husband, Mr. Dinkel, has assured Colonel Stonehead that the Boers are in reality one-third negro in blood, two-thirds devils in morals, and three-thirds savages in their mode of living. "I hade them like boison," he says; "I haf sbent dwenty years mit 'em, and I know dem like a pook. Shoot dem down, is vot I say; kill dem like rats."

The Colonel, delighted with these sentiments, next proceeds to explain that Lord Roberts will quickly end the war. He says that the Field-Marshal will presently be joined by French, and an immense army will move into the Free State by way of Enslin and Ramdam. The date of the movement he knows, but may not tell, though it is not far off.

Much more of such information, gleaned at the headquarters, but not known in England, or even in the army itself, does the frank Colonel yield under the contagious candour of the astute Dinkel.

Out in the quiet garden, where the broad banana leaves and the fans of the palms are silhouetted against the softly luminous sky, the captain and the maiden are strolling.

What a pretty picture two youths of opposite sexes make when Cupid's conditions are all fulfilled—and they are alone together—and the lights are low; and

especially when he typifies Valour in uniform, and she suggests Beauty linked with Innocence !

"No," she said, "you must not ; let me walk by myself. We do not know each other well enough for that. Besides, you will go away to-morrow, and we may never see each other again."

"I'm not going to-morrow," he said.

"Why, yes," she replied. "You must start to-morrow if Lord Roberts moves forward on Sunday."

"I got word to-day that he starts in just a week. I can have three more lovely days with you. Truly—on honour—he does not start until a week from to-day."

"I am glad—if you are glad," the maiden said. "But, now, we must go indoors. It is really too chilly for me out here."

An hour flew, and ten o'clock came. The Dinkels met in the room of the father and mother. "Vot did you found owd?" he asked, first of his wife and, next, of his daughter. "So," he said, "Vot blamed fools! Dey vill gif away their stomachs if you ask them. You found owd dot Colesberg don't get bomparded. I found owd dot French choins Lord Ropperts, und, my leetle darling, you make luf to dot silly cabtain and he told you choost when Lord Ropperts is advancing. Vell, ve can gif our friends in Bretoria all der news do-morrow."

This is a kodak snapshot of one foreign family in

one hotel in Capetown; but there were many foreign families in several hotels in that city.

Come up to the front if you wish to see how spies work.

There! we are passing De Aar, once the advance base of the Western forces. That is where the spies and rebels held high-day and holiday, for the British were then as green as grass. That is where bearded Boers used to stroll about the great camp, noting the arrival of the horses and mules, watching the stocking of the sheds with harnesses, bridles, and saddles, counting the boxes of ammunition, and the hillock heaps of biscuit boxes. They said they had come to see if we wanted any potatoes or butter, or would not like to pay them £25 each for a few £5 horses. All day long they used to helio what we were doing, or ride to the nearest rebel headquarters and report more in detail.

Only Heaven, good luck, and Boer cowardice ever saved De Aar and its two million pounds' worth of stores.

In time the British organised armies, and to go with them they formed their transport services. They hired carts and men from the country around; negroes to drive, and any sort of white men that happened along to serve as conductors. In Natal it is fair to suppose that they salaried a few traitors and spies in this way, because it is said that on that side Englishmen are all English, Scotchmen are all Scotch, and all white men

are white. It is different in the three-quarters Dutch towns of the Colony, and if many of the transport men were not in sympathy with the Boers, it was due to British good luck rather than to good management.

Even in the employment of scouts, the British established the doubtful rule, "that they must know the country and speak the Taal" (the lingo of the Boer).

The British fought battles, and now and then they halted.

At once the farmers and the shop and hotel keepers came forward and said: "We are so glad you have come," adding, always, that they were English or pro-English. They always said that the Boers had been very kind and just, and had taken nothing, but that the "Tommies," oh, my! Fruit and fowls and forage had been stolen right and left—and who was to pay the bills? The British promised to pay, and bought their produce, rented their houses, took rooms in their taverns, and always had them hanging about, listening, questioning, watching. The longer they rested, the more their suspicions were aroused. Lights in the houses of their new friends were flashed toward the Boers at night, mounted men dashed away when they approached some houses, Boers swam the river to and from other cottages, helios flashed on distant hills; negroes came in and gave themselves up to loaf about for a day—and disappear!

And yet the British continued to enrich everybody,

treated every man as if he was as guileless as themselves, and hampered no one with distrust—except the correspondents of the London newspapers. In return they got worthless information and maps, and lies about the Boers.

The British were ringed around by a circle of sleepless eyes. They never made a move without presently seeing that the Boers were prepared for it.

To fight an invisible enemy was terribly wearying, but to feel as if the very air they breathed was a conductor of intelligence to that enemy was too uncanny for words. Once a colonel begged of his general to allow him to do a pretty stroke “on his own.” He wanted to make a night attack on a certain kopje.

“You may,” said the general, “if you tell all your officers precisely what you are doing, and also make it known to the colonels whose regiments are on either side of yours.”

The colonel in question made the move without ever taking a soul, except his general, into his confidence. He was trapped, encircled, killed; and his command suffered awful slaughter. Said one of the Boers who helped to remove the dead: “We have never stayed on that kopje at night before, but we got word at seven o’clock that this regiment was coming at eleven, so we kept in our places.”

That is offered as a sample of the British experiences—not as an extraordinary case.

The British were fighting in an enemy's country, but they could never grasp the fact in all its fell significance. They could not believe that there was a lie on nearly every tongue which spoke fair, a trick in almost every offer of help, a double-face above many a collar in our auxiliary service, a dagger up half the sleeves that went with the open hands they grasped.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### THE ROMANCE OF FUNK

YOUNG Cockran was not obliged to do the work of a war correspondent, which was good luck for him ; but he always boasted of it wherever he went, which was very bad taste.

He was something or other in the De Beers Company, and his salary went on while Kimberley was besieged, and he waited to get back there. You could not detect the coward in him—you never would have suspected him to be a coward—so much are cowards like other men except just at the moment when the pinch comes.

Indeed, in all the war, I only heard of a few cases of uncovered or confessed cowardice, and the worst of those came to light when there was a sudden short epidemic of funk that infected a mass of men. One of these men, being found hidden behind a vaal bush and being urged back to the firing line by his captain, replied, "You'll have to drag me back or kick me, sir. I am a louse, and I admit it. I am in a horrible funk, and I can't help it."

Cockran, the correspondent, went to report a certain



battle which began at daybreak just as he was marching in the forefront of the army, so that when the firing burst forth like the all-enveloping steam from an exploded boiler he was in the worst of it. He lay down like every one else, but when the soldiers began to find their feet and rise, crouched double, to run forward a few yards at a time, he lay still. His heart and brain were paralysed by an almost mortal funk. A surgeon-major happened along, and said, while standing in a driving rain of Mauser bullets, "Hello! whereabouts are you wounded?"

"I ain't wounded at all," Cockran replied, "I'm frightened to move. There's nothing the matter with me but funk."

The surgeon-major was moving away with disgust writ in capital lines all over his face, when Cockran called out to him, "Are you looking after the wounded? Let me help you." And up he jumped and began walking about in a leisurely way among the flying shot looking for wounded "Tommies." Some stretcher-bearers found a bunch of battered and bleeding men far forward, where the bullets were fiendishly thick, and Cockran ran there and helped to lift the poor fellows upon the stretchers. One bearer was keeled over with a ball in his skull, and Cockran took his place between the handles of the last stretcher, and helped carry it to the dressing-ground beyond the farthest line of tiny sand fountains tossed up by the bullets. Once

out of danger, he stayed out. And next morning—he ran away to Capetown.

“My nerves are torn to shreds,” he confided to me on that morning, as he overtook me in his cart, and gave me a lift to my regimental camp; “and I have had enough. I have only seen one fight, but I am fed up on war already. Now I am going to live with the ladies at the Mount Nelson Hotel.”

“You behaved mighty bravely in the fight yesterday.”

“Bravely!” he repeated, with a sneer. “I am about as brave as those steenbok that got caught between the two armies at Graspan, and went mad with fright, and finally charged the Guards Brigade and broke away. You see, so many of my friends are fighting in this war that it would never have done for me to see nothing of it. I would have been chivvied out of Africa when we all came together in Kimberley at the finish. But I got under fire by accident, and I had an awful fright. Then that surgeon-major came along and I confessed what a funk I was in. I was so ashamed when I told him the truth that, though I was paralysed with fright, I jumped up and rushed into the fire and made a tremendous bluff at being brave. I kept up the bluff until I got out of range of the bullets, and then—well, my nerve is rotten, and no train in South Africa can run quick enough to suit me when once I get aboard of one.”

That is the only case I met with in the war which was at all akin to the imaginative descriptions of battle incidents which make up such books as "The Red Badge of Courage," and which crop out occasionally in the writings of Balzac, Zola, and the host of other authors who have touched more or less heavily, at times, upon war. I call all this thrilling fancy work the Romance of Funk. Its like is only to be found in books, or in such extraordinarily rare and modest suggestions of the written thing as this case of Cockran.

"Do not go to a war if you ever mean to write about it," said a clever *littérateur* at the outbreak of the Transvaal war. "You will never be able to write interestingly after you have seen the stupid real thing." He was entirely right. Never, after seeing a war, can a conscientious novelist produce the looked-for and conventional thing. The nonsense that is written about war is not alone what many a reader likes; it is what most of us expect and think to be the result of invariable processes of the minds of men who find themselves facing death in battle. The truth is that if you could recruit an army with poets, artists, and novelists, you might have such literature and swear by it. How stupid by comparison are the mental processes and behaviour of real soldiers, who have only rudimentary imaginations, who never dream, and who are trained not to think. Officers and "Tommies," both have told me that when they are under fire if they think of their past sins

or present loves—if mother, wife, or sweetheart come into their thoughts—they push the impulse back and say, “that is not in the game. I must play the game,” and on they go with every thought of killing others, and never a thought of dying.

Trained not to think, I said. Take the case of Trooper Metford, of the Battersby Mounted Troop. Fifteen men of this gallant force were under a galling fire from invisible Boers hidden in a clump of trees at Paardeberg. The colonel sent word for these troopers to retire, and the captain in command, while executing the order, saw a trooper holding an extra horse.

“Whose?” he asked.

“Trooper Stevens’s.”

“Where is he?”

“Don’t know; hasn’t turned up.”

Back to search for Stevens went the captain into the shower of scudding bullets, earning one of the greater number of those medals so few of which hit a mark. He searched the veldt until he came upon a bundle of khaki. It proved to be Stevens, lying with his head upon his folded arms, dead—to all appearances. The captain lifted one of the khaki arms, and from the way it fell when he dropped it, he fancied that there must be life remaining in the trooper. He actually suspected that—even with death singing the air full of Mauser music all around him—Stevens might have fallen asleep. He picked up a stick and whacked the trooper a smart

blow across the back. Instantly Stevens rolled over, and cried out, "What the devil are you doing? Why can't you let me sleep?"

Then he sat up and rubbed his eyes. Opening them at last he recognised his captain, and was ashamed.

He was sent to the rear under arrest, and that night he sent to his captain to ask him to come and hear something very important and urgent that he had to say. The captain returned the answer that he never wished to see or speak to him or any man like him while he lived. On the next day the prisoner saw the captain passing by and yelled to him, "For God's sake stop, captain, as you hope for mercy yourself, stop and hear me."

"Well, what is it?"

"Have me shot, captain; please have me shot. Don't let me be taken before the colonel. I cannot face him—never, never! Oh, do not let the colonel see me, but please have me shot quick. I deserve to die, and I am willing, but I never could face the colonel."

Evidently there was not a spark of the romance of funk in Trooper Stevens. He was a sleepy-head, but he was not a coward.

Thus far we have found only one case that carried a slight suggestion of the extraordinary behaviour of the battle heroes of fiction. We shall not find another trace of the Romance of Funk in my record of the ex-

periences of the men I met in the British Army in South Africa.

Perhaps Englishmen are too practical. I do not think them too stolid or phlegmatic, but they possess some quality which has made it impossible for me to find any man who, under fire, regretted having once cheated a schoolmate, or bitterly recalled a hasty word he spoke to his mother twenty years before, or required to be peppered with bullets in order to think of his sweetheart—except with the firm belief that he would live to marry her.

I am not speaking now of the men who feel the shadow of coming death envelope them. That is another story—and a strange one.

Some men, while they lie under fire, gather silly useless little heaps of stones before them—not big enough to shelter a rabbit; and some drop a hint to a neighbour that a steel umbrella would not be a bad thing to have when it is raining lead, or they lie still and think out a new idea for a bullet-proof breastplate, which they describe to you the next day; but, as a rule, all are too busy shooting or leading their men to bother with thinking about themselves.

The officers have had it easier in this than in most wars, because they have carried rifles and had a chance to use them. A rifle, put in a man's hand, will dispel a lot of funk, merely by giving him something to do, and turning his thoughts to business. As for

"Tommy," he always appears to think of the danger after it has passed, and says to you next day, "I've got a bally bellyfull, and I bally well wish I was home." Thus he speaks on the day after a hot fight; but on the day after that, when the general instructs all colonels to feel the pulses of the regiments, Tommy is found to be itching to give the enemy another taste of the British prescription: Lee-Metford and lyddite, ten parts of the first to one part of the second.

"King Coffee," like sleepy-head Stevens, of whom I have told, presents a case to the truth of which an entire battalion can swear. He had sure enough funk, but the romantic element, with which funk is usually sugared over in the popular war tales, was wholly missing. "Coffee" is a member of the mess sergeant's little squad, and his business is to cook the coffee for the officers' mess of the Southumberland Rifles. He went through one battle and bore himself, to the eye of man, as well as any one in it. But that was merely because no human eye could see "the jumps" that had hold of him, or look into his heart, which was as white as milk.

The next time the word went round at night for all to prepare for battle next morning, he spoke up to the mess sergeant, saying: "Let me stop in camp, will you, sergeant? I have been in one bally battle, and I don't like it. I don't care who knows it, I'd rather stop behind and make the coffee." He has had his way. He



stops behind when fighting's on. But he is called "Coffee" and "King Coffee"—which most men would dislike (for the reason of it) more than the danger of death. But the majority of men have no fright under fire—nothing but a momentary qualm, which they can easily control.

I once asked Captain Bowen, of Kimberley, to recall his sensations when he got his baptism. "I was leading thirty-two men," he said, "when the Boers opened on me unexpectedly in advance. I pushed ahead, and next met a fire on my right flank as hot as any that has been known in this part of the country. The bullets zipped all around me. They came in ropes. I gave the order for all to dismount, and my only thought was of my men. My God! I thought, have I led my men into this trap, and am I to become responsible for having a lot of them killed? We advanced as far as seemed reasonable, and they lay down, I giving them the range at which to fire. I kept myself up, on my knees, to overlook them, and when I observed that they frequently looked around to see if I was there, I knew that I was justified in keeping myself raised above them. I had been obliged to stand up to gauge the range, and I confess that when I did so I realised the fact that I was as exposed as a target. However, I wanted to do my duty by my men, and that impulse governed me then, as it did afterwards when I moved to and fro among them, talking to them. As to being

shot or killed—well, of course, before I joined the force I had threshed that all out in my mind, and that did not weigh much with me afterwards.”

Captain Bowen got a very nasty wound in this his first important engagement. One particular Boer kept on shooting at him until, as the captain said, “it amounted to persecution.” This Boer was the only one who showed himself. His conduct grew so annoying, that Captain Bowen at last stood still and emptied his revolver at him. He did not hit the Boer, and when his revolver was empty the captain passed on. It was when he was returning that this same Boer landed a Mauser bullet in the captain’s chin.

In the last sentence of his account of his feelings when under fire is the pith of what twenty officers replied when I asked them if they were afraid when they were first in great danger: “I had settled all that when I joined the army,” each one of them replied.

A surgeon famous in Africa and America, Dr. Lindley, serving with Rimington’s Scouts, said: “Once we advanced upon a kopje, which my commanding officer imaged to be unoccupied. I believed it was crowded with Boers. I rode up and said so to the major, but he afterwards told me that he did not hear me. On he went, and I said to myself, simply: “Oh, well, if he can go there so can I. Five minutes later the whole hill blazed with rifle fire, and we found that the enemy was not only in front but on both sides of us. What

did I think? Nothing. I had enough to busy me in looking after the wounded."

A major of my acquaintance, who has more imagination and a better gift of expression than the majority of soldiers, gave me a very interesting account of his sensations under fire.

"My observation is," said he, "that as you march into fire you notice the most trivial things. You say to yourself, 'Hello! that man has one stirrup three inches lower than the other.' 'What letters were those on the shoulder of the man who just hurried past?' 'That's the red and white check of the Scots Guards; what's he doing here?' You see the men in front falling on their faces, and you think, 'That's where the fire is getting hot. Can't we get any forrarder than that?' You find yourself there, and you also lie down and begin shooting. I have been where it truly seemed that you could not raise your fingers, spread wide open, without having them shot off, and I've simply thought, 'Not one of us will get out of this.' It seemed only a casual thought—not one that made any difference to anybody.

"I once had a choice of being taken prisoner by the Boers or dashing over an exposed ridge well within range of a thousand of them. As I would have shot myself sooner than be taken, there really was no choice. I sprang on my horse and made the dash, fully expecting to be killed, and yet not afraid and not really

thinking of it, though I want to live as much as any man. You do not think of it—or of home—or of Heaven, or of anything except of taking your part in whatever comes.

“After being many hours under shell fire, once, I had very peculiar sensations,” the major continued. “The strain must have been too prolonged for my nerves, because, I remember, I found myself saying, ‘Oh, why do not our people silence that gun which keeps on killing men all around me? D—— that Boer gunner’ (you swear when the strain gets too intense—even if you are not a swearing man), ‘why don’t we blow him to bits, d—— him; he is doing too well.’ But at the end of twelve hours—it was at Modder River, you see—I got tired, and I said to myself, ‘I wish this thing would stop. I don’t care which side wins, if they will only stop. I want a rest and a change, and a whiskey and soda—and a chance to walk about.’”

I noticed, when I saw British officers in the company of ladies in the towns we took or held, that these ladies invariably asked to be told of some horrid experience or act of heroism. I noticed, as well, that their national temperament and training always led the officers to begin such a tale with the phrase, “Well, you know, once I was in a horrible funk.” That prelude was offered to excuse the modest story which was to follow. I do not believe they were often frightened—these men

who are almost too valiant, since they seem always to rely upon courage, even when strategy would serve them better. But I can truthfully say that I was once in a funk, not in battle or on the way to it, but in a case of tremendous surprise following after a day of extreme nervous tension.

By no will of mine, I had been under heavy Mauser and "pom-pom" fire for hours on the previous day at the Modder River fight. The next day broke, and, having lost my saddle-horse in the battle, I strolled ahead of the resting army to the vacated Boer trenches along the river-bluff. Seeing a Free State flag waving above a building beyond the river, I determined to secure it as a trophy and a souvenir. When I broke through the thicket of trees and bushes, I saw regarding me a dozen unmistakable Boers. I had no doubt I should be killed, but this was not when I trembled, for a danger that is prospective is much more fearful than one which suddenly seizes you without warning. But, instead of shooting, these slouching, burly, rough-cast Boers called to know what I wanted. I called back that I would like them to send over a boat which was by their feet, and take me across to their shore. They refused. "You are more anxious to get over here than we are to go to your side," said a young man with a sense of humour. "Go up-stream and you will find a drift where you can walk across." The building by which these men stood was a hospital, they told me,

and by a closer study of them I saw that they were doctors and wounded men. I had, therefore, been in no danger, after all. I reached the drift just as some of the troopers of the Ninth Lancers were crossing, and, except that they threatened to shoot me for not instantly explaining to their satisfaction who I was, crossed the river easily.

Ahead lay a yellow road, and a village beyond ; a smiling yellow road, with enticing trees here and there, —where a tree is so rare that one seems almost as good as a park would in other lands, and quiet and peace brooded over all the prospect. The sole reminder of war was beside me, where a tavern, wrecked by shell, was being searched by looters, who came forth with bottles of beer, armfuls of cigarettes, a turkey, a bottle of champagne, and the like. But before me all was as serene as the view of a little village at home on a Sunday morning. I had found an abandoned Boer horse, taken a saddle from a poorer beast near the river, and was riding to the village. The men of the Ninth Lancers clattered up, and were riding a few yards ahead, past two or three houses. Suddenly a fierce fusillade burst from the windows and garden walls of these cottages. The troopers swung off their horses, sank upon one knee each, and peppered away at their assailants. Bullets flew all around me, and I sat upright above the kneeling soldiers, a superb target, motionless, incapable of movement—in a funk. Perhaps it was be-

cause of the previous day's strain, and because I had been very long without food ; but I cannot explain it, or say other than that it never happened before or afterwards. The Boers ran out of the backs of the houses, leaped upon their horses, and spurred over the veldt. The Lancers bolted after them, shooting as they rode. I was left alone upon the highway, and then the fit of nervousness left me as suddenly as it had come. I pulled a rein to turn my horse and follow the Lancers, when an army friend came trotting up.

"Hello," said he ; "they say there's food and drink at a tavern ahead."

"But there are Boers in all those houses," said a scout, joining us.

"Let's chance it," said I to them ; and to myself I whispered, "Heavens, what a funk I had !"



## CHAPTER XXX

### A RAILWAY RECORD

"Prince Houssan took and spread the carpet, and as soon as he had formed his wish, he and his officer whom he had brought with him were transported to the caravansary at which he and his brothers were to meet."—*Arabian Nights' Entertainments*.

NOW that we appear to see the end of the war and its trials and tests, we can almost confidently say of one of its accessories that it has been wholly admirable; that it will be recorded in history as an almost perfect feature of an undertaking otherwise too much marred by blunders, flaws, and unanticipated obstacles.

I refer to the Cape Government Railway system, by means of which the British fought a war in which they were obliged, as it were, to land troops and supplies at Gibraltar, and rush them to the Pyrenees at first and then on to Paris.

As this is literally a feat which Great Britain may yet have to perform between those identical points in Europe, it is of double interest to know that Capetown is 600 miles from the Orange River, just as the Pyrenees are 600 miles from Gibraltar, and Pretoria and Paris

are, respectively, 1,000 miles from Capetown and Gibraltar.

To move 200,000 troops as fast as they can be landed, and hurry after them their tents and guns, horses, ammunition, fodder, and food, would strain the resources of a standard gauge double-track trunk line in England; yet not a hitch occurred in the performance of this feat by the narrow gauge single-track railway which was practically commandeered in South Africa.

Which was practically commandeered as you shall see, and yet which continued to discharge all its normal functions as if there was no war to strain its resources. How this was done makes a wonderful tale of British patriotism, enthusiasm, and genius, and therefore one well worth the telling.

The Cape Government railways comprise a system of, roughly, over 2,000 miles, which consists of three main lines; one from Capetown, one from Port Elizabeth, and one from East London. These so converge that all three terminate at Bulawayo in one direction, and at Johannesburg and Pretoria in the other, with a means of connection with Natal and Delagoa Bay.

The war crippled these railways at the point of junction with the railways of the Boer Republics, whose armed men kept forcing the paralysis further and further down into the colony, until at one time the junctions at De Aar and Naauwpoort were threatened, and the junction with the East London line with the

other two main lines was actually destroyed. That was when the Boers took Stormberg Junction. One result of that was that the coal supply of the colony from the South African mines was cut off, and thereafter coal had to be brought from Europe—a doubly serious thing, because, in the first place, it became much more costly, and, secondly, it all had to be carried in the same direction as the troops and supplies, thus adding greatly to the difficulties of the transport problem. But, on the other hand, whatever southward progress the Boers made still left the railway touching the front, and thus it was that it became and remained one of the most important factors in the military situation.

The railway is presided over by the railway department of the Cape Colony government, whose head is called the Commissioner of Railways. Unfortunately for Great Britain the disloyal Bond was in control of the government when the war broke out, and the world witnessed the amazing spectacle of a colonial government at odds with the Crown, and willing to subject itself to a charge of common feeling with those who had for nearly twenty years engaged in an underground conspiracy to drive the English out of South Africa.

To say the least, the Commissioner of Railways did not facilitate the assistance given by this railway to the Imperial forces. But he was rendered harmless by the fact that the complexion of the working force of

the system, from the executives downward, was wholly different—wholly loyal.

Have the British ever soberly thought of one fact in connection with the past Boer supremacy in South Africa—and have they duly congratulated themselves upon it? The fact I mean is this: that the wretched, solitude-seeking, unclean Boer has seen his country developed against his will and without his collaboration.

The consequence is that the Uitlanders run his post-offices, his railways, and his telegraphs. He has not brain enough to distribute letters, act as guard on a cattle train, or carry a message from a telegraph station to a neighbouring farm. If a Boer possessed the brain for any of these more menial duties of modern life he could not perform them because of his innate dishonesty. The other Boers would know better than to trust him with a letter, a telegram, or the iron in the railway brake, which he would steal and sell for a penny a pound.

Now that South Africa has passed into British hands the Boer will still cling to the wilderness and its dirt, and will never be in the way of those who turn the wheel of progress.

The task before the loyal working force of the Cape Government Railway was for every man to do his best, and for all to rise to the extraordinary occasion. They had to keep the civil traffic going as well as to support the enormous pressure of military business. It was

predicted that civil passengers, especially in the short suburban runs in and out of Capetown, would have to be carried in goods trucks, and that many trains would have to be discontinued, but the railway people are now able to boast with natural pride that they did not subject the regular passenger traffic to any inconvenience of any sort. So long as the lines admitted of it, through train service for passengers, mails, live stock, and goods were maintained unimpaired, except that live stock and goods had to give precedence to military traffic.

Between November, 1899, and the following February the railway carried for the military authorities 18,000 animals and 37,000 tons of stores on the Western line, and, on all lines, 70,000 men and 30,000 horses. In the first four months of this year, to April 30th, the lines conveyed what were equal to 60,000 ordinary trucks, most of them many hundreds of miles. Of troops there were equal to more than 11,500 standard four-wheeled trucks carrying 30 to 40 men each. Horses and mules utilised the equivalent of 14,000 trucks, and other military traffic used what were equal to 35,400 trucks. Most of these vehicles also made long runs, Kimberley being 647 miles from Capetown, and Norvals Pont being about as far. These figures show that the railway operatives moved more than 500 trucks daily, including Sundays.

It must be borne in mind that the line upon which

this feat was performed is not like one of the great trunk lines of Europe or America.

It is a single track road with a ruling gradient of one foot in forty along the first 500 miles out of Capetown, the first 350 miles out of Port Elizabeth, and the first 300 miles out of East London. The curves, equally difficult to negotiate, are, some of them, of five chains radius, while many have a radius of six, seven, or eight chains. In addition, long distances separate the stations, which makes it difficult for trains going in opposite ways to pass one another, while the narrow gauge (three feet and a half) prevents fast running. The waterless character of the country renders necessary the carriage of water, even for the supplies of the employés at some of the stations. Water also had to be carried to the troops at Rensburg when there was fighting on the northern border of the colony.

During the earlier months of the war great anxiety resulted from the absolute necessity for pushing the rolling stock well to the front, where it was constantly menaced by the Boers, and had to be pushed back. The seizure of junctional points had to be foreseen, and the rolling stock required to be so distributed that if, and when, junctions were destroyed, there should be such a proportion of engines and vehicles that each of the three lines could continue to be utilised.

When Stormberg Junction was broken, the management had sufficient rolling stock on the East London

branch to operate that line, and it was because of this foresight and ingenuity that it was possible to hurry to General Gatacre the assistance he needed. But to go into the matter of the service the railway performed in connection with actual warfare would be idle, since the military counted upon the railway as the basis of the most important plans and movements. Methuen depended upon the western line throughout his early campaign, and Lord Roberts only cut loose from this line at Kimberley to march across to the Free State line, which is an extension of the Cape Government system from Norvals Pont.

To debit the Imperial Government with the usual traffic charges upon troops in passenger trains and upon food, forage, and guns, would have not only entailed an immense amount of bookkeeping, but it would have put on record, for the guidance of disloyal persons, the movements, number, and destinations of our soldiers, and a complete betrayal of the weight and destination of the guns and supplies hurried to the front. On this account it was agreed between the Government and railway that the latter should charge so much per truck or carriage per mile, and that there should be no per capita charges for troops or animals except for the few that went by regular passenger trains. No weights of goods were recorded, the only care being to see that the maximum carrying capacity of the trucks was not exceeded.



In future wars this method will be copied, because it combines economy with a secrecy which is valuable beyond computation. I did not verify the figures, but have heard that the prices charged against the Imperial Government are equal to a penny per man per mile, three-quarters of that sum for a horse, and five farthings per ton per mile for supplies. The Railway Department was said not to be losing or profiting unduly by this arrangement up to the time when I left the army.

A plan which was adopted by the military duplicated all the railway officials, from the managers to the station-masters, with military officials. The principle was thoroughly good, and in practice has worked very well. Before it was adopted, and when a host of army officers gave confusing and irreconcilable orders, the situation was a tangled one. Under it the subordinate army officers submitted their orders to their superiors, who considered them and decided whether they were practicable and necessary before communicating them to the railway men.

Thus work was simplified and hastened. It was Colonel Girouard who had the wit thus to parallel the civil railway system with his own military system, appointing an officer of the Royal Engineers to watch and to treat with every man in an executive position on the railway staff. This was the Colonel Girouard, of Canadian birth, who so distinguished himself in the recent campaigns in Egypt, where he is still President

of the Egyptian Railways. In South Africa he was Director of Railways with the rank of all the general managers combined. General Forestier-Walker was the General Commanding the Lines of Communication, and other able and important men in the system were General Settle, Inspector-General; and Major Murray, traffic manager of the Burmah Railways; Major Cowie, directing manager of the North-Western Railways of India; Captain Waghorn, chief consulting engineer to the Indian State Railways; and Lieutenant Leggett, traffic manager for the War Department.

The civilians, to whom the utmost credit is due for the flawless work done by the Cape Government Railways, were C. B. Elliott, general manager, and T. R. Price, chief traffic manager. Mr. Elliott did not begin his South African career as a trained railwayman. He was at first registrar to two judges, and then, being called to the Bar, began to practise, but after a short time returned to the Civil Service. He became Assistant-Commissioner of Crown Lands and Public Works, and when it was decided to appoint a general manager of the Cape Railways he was selected. That was in 1880.

Mr. Price, the chief traffic manager, joined the railway service in England in 1863, and received an unusual training, being educated for that profession as men are trained for any of the older professions. He got his widest experience on the Great Western Rail-

way. In South Africa he began as traffic superintendent of a division of the Midland system, and worked his way along until he became the agent in the Free State and Transvaal for the Cape Railways, and finally, in 1893, was appointed to the important post of chief traffic manager. Others who deserve great credit for the assistance they gave to the Empire in this time of its need are Mr. John Brown, engineer-in-chief; Mr. H. M. Beatty, chief locomotive superintendent; Mr. Cresswell Clark, traffic manager of the Midland system; Mr. J. O. Patterson, traffic manager of the Eastern system; and Mr. J. Mitchell, goods superintendent at Capetown and its docks—where, by the way, Sir Edward Chichester did wonderfully valuable and ingenious service in landing all the troops, and unloading all the stores.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### SOUTH AFRICA'S FUTURE

NO matter what is urged against it in print, a great many men will go to South Africa to seek their fortunes, and another considerable number will be left there out of the army.

I fear that most of these men will regret having ever asked even the barest living of South Africa.

Although the most popular sayings about that unattractive region are such as to deter immigration, the idea that fortunes are to be made there by men without capital remains firmly rooted in many minds. What are these sayings? The first is that South Africa is a land of

“Flowers without scent,  
Birds without song,  
Rivers without water,  
Women without beauty,  
Men without honour.”

And latterly, in the army, the phrase of the Canadian who parodied General Phil Sheridan's remark about Texas, rings in every humorist's mouth: “If I owned

South Africa and — —, I would rent out South Africa and live in the other place." Such is the opinion developed in the minds of practical men who have lived there, marched over great reaches of it, and journeyed by rail from Capetown to the front. Large parts of it are desert lands, no part which any of us has seen is fertile, as we understand the term.

Where the land yields best it is mainly used for the breeding of sheep, horses, goats, and ostriches. It is only where water is abundant that we see crops being raised, and they are grown in small plots, for water in South Africa has been termed "a curio."

If I paint the picture with its bad qualities too strong in colour, please allow me to do so for the sake of the good that will come of it. I would rather exaggerate the defects of a land that is certain to disappoint new settlers, than be guilty of magnifying its few good points, and thus delude those who are seeking new homes.

To be strictly just, there is a reasonably rich region in that part of Cape Colony which is called the Hex River country. Wheat and fruit and the vine flourish in that section, the pasturage is good, genuine farming is there carried on, and the people are prosperous. But the region offers no chance for immigrants. The land is all taken up and held at a very high price, and those who own it—especially the dominant Dutch—will not sell. Instead, they want more acres, even though they

cannot till what they have—for the Boer is a land-loving, land-proud mortal, who estimates his social position and his degree of content by the number of his acres.

There is good grain-producing soil in the eastern part of the Orange River Colony, and the ravages of the war may send a few—a very few—of those farms into the market, but the price will be beyond the purses of the average fortune-seekers. There is not, and will not be, any of this land to be picked up on what is called a settler's claim—*i.e.*, free to whosoever will build upon and work it.

In the Transvaal, too, good and desert belts alternate, and there is plenty of unworked land, I believe, in the dry and hilly upper half of that country. But the soil which is productive, even in the way of pasturage, is not in the market.

If any man thinks to find new gold or diamond mines, he may as well be told that the chances of that are precisely equal to his chance of having at his disposal the time, money, and expert knowledge which the great mining corporations have utilised in studying the entire country, and in taking liens or paying yearly premiums for the first right to work such soils when they need or desire to do so.

The nearest thing to a gold mine that remains open to newcomers, in the greater part of those new colonies, is the ostrich ; at least, so I was informed by a great

many shrewd and successful men who live in Natal, the Orange River Colony, and the Transvaal. But breeding ostriches requires money—for the land and the birds—to start with. And one must know or learn the methods by which a profit is to be had in that industry. You cannot raise ostriches as you take a snapshot photograph—by pressing a button and letting nature do the rest.

In the army I found many young men among the Australians, and some few Canadians, who talked of remaining in South Africa, so I made it my business while I was in Capetown, Kimberley, and Bloemfontein to ask the leading men for their knowledge and opinions as to the inducements the country offers to immigrants. It may have merely happened so, but I did not meet a man who favoured the coming of a large number of new settlers. All who were of British blood wished for more men of their own race there—in numbers sufficient to outvote the Dutch, but they could not promise the newcomers a living.

All agreed that capital must come first to prepare the land for labour. Money in large sums must be spent in irrigation, either by tapping the earth or the rivers. The individual new settler can turn almost any bit of the baked, brown veldt into a laughing garden—if—if he has the means to buy the land, and the money to tap the earth. The very Karroo itself yields water almost everywhere at from a few score to 1,500 feet depth. It is so like the territory which the Mormons



of America are rapidly converting into a more than ordinarily fertile wheat and garden country, that no one doubts its possibilities. Indeed, wherever men with capital, like Mr. John D. Logan, at Majesfontein, have pumped the water to the surface, a rich verdure has been the quick reward. And every fountain and stream in that enormous tract shows a green and smiling aspect in its surroundings.

This, then, is what capital can and will do as the pioneer of immigration in South Africa.

If instead of suggesting a tide of new settlers for that land, you asked whether it is not promising ground for the investment of large capital in irrigation schemes, encouraged by liberal legislation, I would answer that I truly think it is. I could not write so positively along that line as I do write against the cruelty of encouraging poor men to try their luck there, because I did not think to go into that question when I was on the ground. But it is certainly true that my shrewdest, most practical informants left it to be inferred that capital will do well at this, since they all agreed that the land must first be purchased or taken up, and then prepared for settlers.

The small proportion of arable land and really good pasture land which men are working in the two ex-Republics and the Cape Colony is held at what seems to most visitors to be extraordinarily high prices. This is due to the land greed of the Boer in the first place,

and, secondly, to the premiums that have been paid by the mining corporations upon land they have deemed likely to prove rich in metals or minerals. The Boer has come to suspect that there is either a gold or a diamond mine on every so-called farm; and though he will have nothing to do with mining in any form, he is sufficiently over-reaching in his shrewdness to determine that he will get a very high price from whoever seeks his land.

It is as true now as when Mr. Bryce wrote it that South Africa is "a vast solitude with a few oases of population," and that this is due to its scanty means of sustaining life, and its few openings for industry unaided by capital.

In closing this subject, it is necessary to refer to another element which must come clearly into the view of whoever shrewdly considers the attractions of South Africa as a field for immigration. This is the fact that all the colonies carry upon their populations the strange yet undeniable curse which follows the mingling of the white and black races wherever it takes place. Wherever there is black labour, it is as a rule uneconomical and slack, but its place cannot be taken by white toil, because of the contempt with which both blacks and white regard the white man who works. It will be a man of very strong character who will undertake to swim against the current of this poisoned opinion—and even he will never cease to suffer from the preju-

diced view his neighbours will take of his activity. White men may not do any manual work in South Africa, and, alas! however much they may laugh at the notion, and vow they will do as they please, time and local training soon bring them to the common level of those who think the white man should lord it over the black, and the black man should sweat.

Finally, nothing in these notes applies to Natal, except my remarks upon the black man's curse. Natal, I understand, is the South African paradise where Britons rule, the earth laughs, and the only discontent grows with the thought that, wherever the flag waves, Johannesburg is to supply the money for public improvements, and to become the natural and perhaps the official capital—which is, of course, the actual case. But I can say nothing about Natal as a field for immigration, because I never set foot there.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### THE LESSONS OF THE WAR

ALMOST every author of a book upon the British-Boer War has begun with the Cape Dutch in Cromwell's time or earlier. Perhaps in thorough justice to that livelier subject—"the lessons of the war," we might fairly go back to Mr. Gladstone's premiership, but it is just as well to commence later. Despite what may be said by any man who has been "abed in England" all the time, I believe the war was unpreventable even before the Jameson Raid. To drive the English out of Africa was the hope, and aim, and constant dream of every Boer for years before that.

As business men went out of their way to write home about what was to them so obvious, surely the men in charge of British national interests should have had equally observant and communicative agents; for if Great Britain is to continue a wide-awake business nation, it should have a wide-awake business Government. If "business" is not an acceptable word to the governing class in Great Britain, then, since Great Britain is, or aims to be, a great business leader among the Powers,

there is something out of joint in such a situation. Besides, there is political business as well as commercial business, and shrewd men at either should have known what was going forward, and have been prepared for it.

Once the war was seen to be at hand the War Office did the very best that could be done with the men and materials at its disposal. It did splendid work. The celerity and smoothness with which it transported an immense army and all its equipments to South Africa were unbroken and unparalleled. No man who writes fairly, observes clearly, or thinks justly, will hesitate to acknowledge and declare this fact.

The failure to supply to the army the Vickers-Maxim quick-firing piece is a bygone trouble, and so is the failure to supply the army with up-to-date cannon. "Let bygones be bygones," some will say. Yea, verily, is the answer of every sincere well-wisher of England, but the only way to do that is to see that such bygones are not repeated and thus perpetuated, for that would alter them from bygone faults to present evils. The folly of continuing to use old-fashioned weapons by forcing the batteries well within the enemy's range, must not be continued; nor should the makeshift of using cumbrous and unsuitably-mounted naval guns as military weapons, or the entrusting of troops to incompetent commanders be ever again resorted to. Lyddite also, as a weapon against men in the open, was proven well-nigh worthless as long ago as December, 1899; let

that be a "bygone" also, and in future wars, if lyddite is used at all, let it be thrown against walls or buildings.

Much has been said of the inferior guns of the army ; of the defects of the Cavalry arm of the service, of the need for opening all ranks to all soldiers and the officer ranks to all classes ; of the undermanning and elementary training of the Army Medical Corps,—and not a word of this had been said in excess of what is just. But look also to the generals, and see that there be no addition to their number except of men who have earned promotion by purely soldierly means ; and that none who have failed as generals in this Transvaal war are kept in their positions.

We have seen how very much of the earlier work in the war was performed by General French, how ably he performed it, and how, for a time (a shocking time to all who stayed at home, and hung breathless on the despatches from the front) he was the only General who could be called a successful leader. The long period of non-success was ended by the arrival of Lord Roberts, who in two wonderful marches—one from Kimberley to Bloemfontein, and the other onward to Pretoria—put a new colour on the appearance of the war, and ended it with victory for the British. Lord Roberts is one of the great figures of military history. It is now becoming the fashion to assert that his course in South Africa was too mild and lenient. So it was—but only at first ; only until he learnt that magnanim-

ity was thrown away upon his enemy. After that he played the game of war differently. But before he is criticised at all—even for his earlier leniency—let us all make certain whether or not that leniency was the Imperial policy, which all the generals were, at first, forced to adopt as the military policy also.

In his army, or while he was in command, two exceptionally brilliant leaders attracted the attention and the praise of all students of military science. One was Ian Hamilton, the other was Baden-Powell. The first is a man of great gallantry and dash, tempered by unfailing good judgment, and strengthened by splendid confidence in himself and his men. The second is distinguished by gifts quite rare in the army—ingenuity and originality, which combine to give him great resourcefulness in strategy. Both are magnetic in their hold upon all who follow them. A third general, new and untried in large operations before this, is Pole-Carew, who is like another Phil Sheridan in his tireless and ceaseless determination to know the ground ahead of him, and to comprehend the plans, mode of warfare, and human attributes of his foe. He was as a scourge to the Boers, and in place of the blind and invariable magnanimity which they mistook for idiocy and cowardice, he varied leniency with severe justice, and did more than we shall ever know to sicken a great many Boers of the war.

Broadwood appears, from this distance, to have done



exceptionally good work, and so have Hunter and Rundle. Kelly-Kenny, too, has more than once shown marked ability. Among the Colonials, Brabant and Bethune stand out as notable leaders, and the Canadians and Australians as first-rate fighting men. And all the time, General French has continued to do grand work, as he did when he stood alone.

Of the men who were in command when all went amiss with the British forces, some have been sent home and the others have remained in the field. Of Lord Methuen one observes that he has done very well from the moment he acted under orders, and in command of a subordinate branch of the army. I did him an injustice in my own mind when I imagined that the nature and character of the pedestrian army, with which he began his advance from Orange River, reflected upon his merits as a general. I am now informed that he was not in the least degree responsible for the incompleteness of the force he led. It appears that the War Office is likewise free from particular blame in the matter. An army of the conventional European pattern, without the extra force of mounted men whose value in South Africa was not, at the outset, perceived, was put together in England and despatched to Capetown. Upon this force the then Commander-in-chief drew for his own use on the east side of the continent. The imminent and fearful danger of a rising within Cape Colony led to the hurried de-

spatch of Lord Methuen with the remnant of what force had up to that time been sent from home, spoiled as it was by the drafts that had been made upon it by one who is not to be either questioned or blamed for perfecting his own forces then in actual contact with the enemy. It is but the simplest justice to Lord Methuen—whose failures while in independent command are not wholly accounted for by this explanation—that this fact should be known to both his critics and his friends.

But now, having endeavoured to do this bit of justice, and hereafter dropping any names of individuals—as well as repudiating in advance the thought that individuals are aimed at through a veil—let me say that a serious fault will be committed by the British nation if it does not calmly weigh the merits of all the generals who held in their keeping the lives of brave men, and the glory of their empire. Let the weak ones be sifted out, and incapacitated for any future chance to prolong wars, lose battles, and drain the fighting blood of the nation. If the hurrahs of the mob at the home-coming of the wan and battle-stained chiefs are able to drown the still small voice of duty, if the tireless machinations of shrewd women close to the Court or the Government are able to beat aside an inclination toward impartial justice—if these things prevail, then the errors of the war against the Boers may be repeated in a really great crisis, when, with an aggres-

sive foe to take advantage of them, the consequences to the British may be dire.

The Boers, with their force of 45,000, or fewer, fighting men, stood very low in the scale of warlike nations. They should not have been able to give a first class Power such a task as their conquest has entailed. Let no one forget that the conquest was made after twelve months of steady fighting, which heavily taxed England's resources. Let no one overlook the cost in life and money—or the far greater cost in prestige which will accrue if the other nations find that this extraordinary experience has taught the victors nothing, has left them blind to the faults which their rivals clearly perceive and mean to profit by.

A mistake which, more than any other error tended to prolong this war, was the futile and misunderstood policy of extra leniency, and, as we see now, absurd magnanimity to an unworthy foe, too corrupt, too long given to suspicion of whatever is good, and too much addicted to evil practices to understand British motives.

Coldly, calmly, in candour let us confess that, small and weak as the Boer Republics were among the Powers of earth, and great as has been the trouble of conquering them, their war-work nevertheless fell far short of the potentialities of their position. Only suppose that instead of playing the part of the still-hunter they had taken up the *rôle* of the earnest and aggressive warrior,

attacking by night as well as by day ! Only imagine what the British task would have been had the Boers left merely a containing force before Natal, and marched a larger force straight to Durban, at the same time capturing De Aar (which would have been an easy task), and spreading deep into Cape Colony to set aflame with active rebellion the passive disloyalty which existed. As matters turned out the Boers made the least of their opportunities, yet we know how the British Army fared up to the time when a great soldier took over its command. What would have happened to it had the Boers made the most of their chances ? It is this that the British nation must regard, for her next foe may easily be an aggressive, offensive, and courageous people.

Every race has its faults, and the Anglo-Saxon is no exception to the rule. Its faults in war are that it always underestimates the strength and good qualities of its enemies, that it usually leaps in unprepared, finishes the job with victory gained by hook and by crook, and then, instead of profiting by experience, applauds itself, distributes bouquets with one hand to the other, and dismisses the matter with Dogberrian thanks to the Giver of good that it is "rid of a villain." Can our race, or any race, correct its faults ? It will be a long step toward their correction if it realises what they are.

A very great mistake, too, is continually, generally

—even nationally—made in praising the British soldier for his willingness to die, for his glorious way of meeting death, of valiantly going forth “to die for Queen and country.” The constant repetition of such phrases begets a wholly wrong train of thought in the minds of both the soldiers and the people. No country wishes for soldiers who die well, or who die at all. What all desire in their fighting men is the ability to kill and live, by employing *finesse*, by strategy, by adroitness in taking cover, by persistence in dealing death while they themselves keep shelter. What soldiers are wanted for is to fight and slay, and to keep on fighting and slaying, while doing their utmost to avoid damage to themselves. It is for strategy, for science in war, that I plead. Where there is a sole dependence upon valour without strategy, men must be urged to win by dying, but no army can depend on sheer valour alone. The costs of victory by such a process are too extravagant, and not even those nations which claim ability to mobilise three millions of men can afford many wars, if they are to be filled with triumphs of that sort.

I have emphasised my admiration of the pluck of officers and men wherever I witnessed their fighting, but if I have failed to point out instances where strategy would have rid such valour of a too heavy accompaniment of death, it is because, writing from the seat of war, I did not often write as a critic. Take the case of

the ambush at the Kornospruit to show the value of pluck and *finesse* combined. Had General Broadwood been content to stand and endeavour to force his way past the Boer breastworks, few men of his command could have escaped death ; but he rightly utilised British pluck to hold the Boers in place, while, by the exercise of British wits, he restored discipline and order, and led his men round the enemy's position, and out of the jaws of death.

That is the sort of man to be encouraged—the Baden-Powell and the Broadwood sort—who are to give to such masters of strategy as Lord Roberts full and complete support in future wars. To bring these out of all ranks and classes of the Queen's subjects, the army must be thrown wide open to all ranks and classes. The present bar, which practically stops all but the aristocracy and the sons of rich tradesmen at the door to the army, must be taken down. Aristocrats and rich men have never yet in any clime or period monopolised the intellectual ability of any people ; on the contrary, the ranks of the titled and the rich are recruited from all classes, and as this is arranged so should the army be, for brains are the best part of every army's equipment, and the army which has the most brain, at top, at bottom, and through all ranks, must ever be the hardest army to beat.

But brains are of little good to an army if they are allowed to wool-gather, to wander from their work, to

study that work as a form of sport, or to apply themselves to it temporarily as an incident in a lifetime. Those who serve in the British Army should be so paid as to cause it to attract earnest and capable men to its ranks, and these men must know that if they exhibit ambition and fitness there is no position they may not attain, with the certainty that their pay will more than cover the cost of whatever rank they reach. Thus, in time, will commissioned ranks come to represent the best material obtainable, and at once, when officers can live upon their pay, the dilettanti, the mere sportsmen, the simple seekers after a society hall-mark, will be shouldered out of the way of the earnest men who will take up the profession of arms as men take up other professions—meaning to master them, to live by them, to rise by them to honour and power.

The army, when reconstructed, must be of a different personnel, but not necessarily larger than, or even as large as, at present. It should be maintained as a leaven for whatever strength it may reach when a great army is needed. This suggestion applies to the army at home. Great, very great store should be set upon the armies of the Colonies, whose men, as we saw them in South Africa, may be equalled but certainly cannot be excelled. Each Colony should possess its own army-nucleus, supported, equipped, and trained by the Imperial authorities. The parts of all these armies should be interchangeable, or at least should be of equal value in the



estimates of the rank and file of all the armies in the opinion of the authorities and people.

This would serve to bind the Empire together with steel. To the Colonial forces will come a proud and independent class of men, such as have the colonial spirit of democracy and of popular equality. They are as amenable to military discipline as any men—more so than most soldiers of the day—to all except such influences as may be odious and demoralising to free men. All these armies or forces should be made well acquainted with one another by joint participation in great annual manœuvres held now in England, the next year in Canada or Australia, later in South Africa. Nothing should be left to foster a feeling of superiority among the officers or men of any one force.

Dull, indeed, were those who did not learn in South Africa this year that the Colonial has very strong merits which the Regulars lack, just as the Regulars have great and necessary qualities needed by the Colonials. We know the merits of the Regulars, and acknowledge and value them. Those of the Colonials are not so well and generally understood. The Colonials won deserved admiration for their individual independence and initiative, their skill in taking cover, and the adaptability by which they were quickly able to meet the Boer with something very like his own tactics. For one thing, the Colonial was not bound by conventionalities which were old at Agincourt, and therefore he could take his part in battle

when he could not see or hear his officer, even after he saw his officer killed. He preferred to fight at ease, and if he was allowed to do so, and could thus kill more Boers (or kill Boers more quickly) in his shirt-sleeves, he would have fought without his coat. This means something to those who saw the Regulars, under a blazing, tropical sun, rigged up like dray-horses, with more straps and hooks, bundles, bottles and bags, than one would think were sufficient to disable any human being, except an European soldier. Poor Tommy ! Doubtless he began to take on this load even before Agincourt, and every half-century has seen it increased, until presently there will be more impedimenta than soldier behind each rifle, if some one does not call a halt on the process.

Unquestionably such a fraternity of fighting men of the Old and the New Worlds would quickly relieve the home army from the red tape which at times has seemed to be strangling it. If that were the case the resultant benefits would be too great and numerous to be set forth in a chapter, or perhaps in a separate book. Without red tape, a command of which I know could have got food for its starving horses the other day, in spite of the fact that the officers' requisition was written upon white instead of upon blue paper. But for red tape, one beleaguered city that I know could have been defended by happy colleagues, instead of jarring and discordant factions. But for red tape, a well-known

English painter might have sketched a certain glorious sunset at Orange River, instead of being told not to do so, "as he was without a pass to visit the village, and consequently was not legally there." But for red tape, the officers of more than one army hospital might have bought beds, sheets, pillow-cases, thermometers, and measuring-glasses for the use of the sick and wounded, instead of letting such care depend upon the chance of obtaining charity from persons whose contributions were not intended for hospital equipment, but for the dainties, the luxuries, and the extra comforts which red tape in this way prevented our sick and wounded men from enjoying.

The subject is indeed too vast. And yet it can all be comprehended in the one sentence: *thorough Reform of the Army is Essential to secure the Prosperity and Safety of Great Britain.*



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